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# MILTON'S PROSODY

*BRIDGES*

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# MILTON'S PROSODY

An Examination of the Rules of the Blank Verse in Milton's later poems, with an Account of the Versification of Samson Agonistes, and general notes by

ROBERT BRIDGES

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# INTRODUCTION.

THE basis of this book is a tract which I wrote five years ago on the rules of Milton's verse in *Paradise Lost*; this is now reprinted with corrections. It is followed by an examination of Milton's subsequent verse, a most interesting development of which is found in *Samson Agonistes*. This part of the book is rewritten from a tract printed in 1889. And to these two tracts I now add some appendices in elucidation of a few questions arisen in the text. My intention throughout has been confined to Milton's verse, and to the mere structure of that: I have done little more than tabulate the simplest facts; and while on the one side of the subject I have refrained from attempting to give any explanation of the laws of English prosody, I have on the other side avoided as far as possible entering even upon the borderland between prosody and poetry. The first of these limitations is desirable until the metrical facts are all got together; and there is still much more omitted than included in my rudimentary analysis. But to have made the distinctions which I have purposely avoided would have implied a very different task from what I set myself, and one, which, had I been disposed to devote time to it, I could not have accomplished. Indeed, it was not until after I despaired of persuading others more competent than myself to execute the work, that I undertook what I have done. I have neither the faculty nor the habits which are the first requisites in one who would compile a grammar of any sort; nor is that kind of labour congenial to my taste: the evidences of which in this book, its inaccuracies and oversights, I prëengage the reader to excuse. And since

classification at its best is often but mere convenience, I may hope that my method is not unfit for my definite and limited purpose.

As the conditions under which the first tract was published forbade its swelling into a readable form, I give here a synopsis of it, a glance at which may, I hope, make its arrangement of rules and exceptions very easy to follow.

R. B.

## SYNOPSIS OF FIRST TRACT, pp. 7–25.

A REGULAR blank verse being first defined as obeying three conditions:—

(1) In the number of syllables, which is ten.

(2) In the number of stresses, which is five.

(3) In the position of stresses, which is on the even syllables.

Then its variations are tabulated under these same three heads; that is, Exceptions:—

(1) To the number of syllables being ten, pp. 7–16.

(2) To the number of stresses being five, pp. 17–19.

(3) To the stresses falling on the even syllables, pp. 19–21.

A chapter on the caesura or break of the verse, pp. 23–25.

# ON THE ELEMENTS OF MILTON'S BLANK VERSE IN *PARADISE LOST*.

**The typical verse has (1) ten syllables, (2) with five stresses, (3) in rising rhythm** (i.e. with the stresses on the even syllables). See Ap. G.

## (1) OF SUPERNUMERARY SYLLABLES.

### A. Extrametrical syllables.

**I. At end of line. An extra syllable sometimes occurs at the end of the line,** more rarely in Milton than in most writers, e.g.

(1) Of rebel Angels, by whose aid aspi(ring). i. 38 and ex. (23) (95).

**Sometimes there are two such syllables,** e.g.

(2) Imbued, bring to their sweetness no sati(ety). viii. 216.

(3) For solitude sometimes is best soci(ety). ix. 249. See p. 41.

**II. In other parts of the line.** In Shakespeare it is common to find an analogous syllable in the midst of the line. See Ap. A. And thus in *Comus*:—

(4) To quench the drouth of Phœ(bus); which as they taste. 66.

(5) And as I passed I wor(shipped). If those you seek. 302.

(6) And earth's base built on stub(ble). But come let's on. 599.

(7) But for that damned magi(cian), let him be girt. 602.

(8) Root-bound that fled Apol(lo). Fool, do not boast. 662.

(9) Crams and blasphemes his fee(der). Shall I go on? 779.

**In P. L. Milton disallowed the use of this syllable.** In the following lines, where the rhythmical effect is partly

preserved, the extra syllable is accounted for by Elision. See B. II.

(10) Departed from (thee); and thou resemblest now. iv. 839.

(11) Before (thee); and not repenting this obtain. x. 75.

(12) Of high collateral glo(ry): Him thrones and powers. x. 86, etc. etc.

**B. Other supernumerary syllables fall under Elision** (which term is generally applied, and is here used as a convenient name, but not to imply that anything is cut off, or lost, or not pronounced). See Ap. B.

**I. The Elisions of common speech.** As in the first line,

(13) Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit,

where the *ie* in 'disobedience' is neither a diphthong nor a disyllable. [In his earlier poems Milton has sometimes used the older full pronunciation of such words, e.g. *Comus*:

(14) With all the grisly legi-ons that troop. 603.

(15) Or ghastly furies' appariti-on. 641.

(16) By a strong siding champion consci-ence. 212.

and thus Delusi-on, conditi-on, complexi-on, visi-on, contemplati-on, etc. There is no example of this in *P. L.*]

**II. Poetic Elisions. These, which were common in Shakespeare, Milton in P. L. reduced, and brought under law. His rules are four.**

*a.* **The first is the rule of open vowels. All open vowels may be elided, whether long, short, double, or combined; and whether both the vowels be in the same word, or divided between two: and *h* is no letter.** Such words as the following fall under this rule:— Being, doing, flying, riot, violent, Israel, Abraham, atheist, hierarchy, variety, obsequious, vitiated, etc. and the italicised vowels in the following lines; e.g.—

(17) Above the *A*onian mount, while it pursues. i. 15.

(18) To set himself in glor*y* *a*bove his peers. i. 39.
(19) Strange horror seize th*ee*, *a*nd pangs unfelt before. ii. 703.
(20) Virt*ue* *i*n her shape how lovely; saw, and pined. iv. 848.
(21) Not in themselves all their known virt*ue* *a*ppears. ix. 110, etc.
(22) N*o* *i*ngrateful food: and food alike those pure. v. 407.
(23) For still they knew, and ought t*o* *h*ave still remembered. x. 12.
(24) And rapture s*o* *o*ft beheld: those heavenly shapes. ix. 1082.
(25) Though kept from man, and worthy to b*e* *a*dmired. ix. 746.
(26) H*e* *e*ffected. Man he made and for him built. ix. 152.
(27) As lords, a spacious world, t*o* *o*ur native heaven. x. 467.
(28) Little inferiour, by m*y* *a*dventure hard. x. 468.
(29) Thou didst accept them: wilt th*ou* *e*njoy the good. x. 758.
(30) For God is als*o* *i*n sleep; and dreams advise. xii. 611.
(31) With spattering noise rejected: oft th*ey* *a*ssayed. x. 567 and ex. (10, 11, 12).

In such words as Higher, though, **the silent *g* does not forbid**, e. g.

(32) Not h*igher* that hill, nor wider looking round. xi. 381.
(33) For he who tempts, th*ough* *i*n vain, at least asperses. ix. 296.

**And *w* may be regarded as a vowel**: as in the words Power, bower, flower, shower, sewer, toward, follower, narrower, etc., and thus the following :—

(34) Of sorr*ow* *u*nfeigned, and humiliation meek. x. 1092.

**And when *wh* is pronounced *h***, e. g.
(35) T*o* *wh*om thus the portress of Hell-gate replied. ii. 746.
(36) Two onl*y*, *who* yet by sovran gift possess. v. 366 and (148).

[† In the list of words just given there are two, *Sewer* (a drain) and *toward*, which have come down to us contracted each of them in two different ways; Toward either as to'ard or t'ward, and sewer had a form *shore*, which is not quite obsolete. There may be room therefore for difference of opinion as to how these words would have been pronounced by Milton, but in any case

they belong to the class of words suffering elision by virtue of *w* considered as a vowel.]

β. **The second rule, pure R. Of unstressed vowels separated by r the first may be elided,** as in the words :—Nectarous, weltering, suffering, glimmering, etc., mineral, general, several, every, artillery, desperate, deliberate, emperour, amorous, timorous, torturer, disfiguring, measuring, etc.

(37) Invoke thy aid to my adventu*r*ous song. i. 13 and (12) (31).

**Also when the vowel is written double,** as in Conqueror, labouring, savoury, neighbouring, honouring, endeavouring, etc., and thus are to be explained such verses as the following, where the elision is between two words :—

(38) A pill*ar of* state: deep on his front engraven. ii. 302.

(39) By day a cloud, by night a pill*ar of* fire. xii. 203.

(40) All judgement, whether *in* heaven, or earth, or hell. x. 57.

(41) Celestial, whether among the thrones, or named. xi. 296.

(42) Carnation, purple, azure, *or* specked with gold. ix. 429.

(43) With spots of gold & purple, azure and green. vii. 479.

(44) The sa*vour of* death from all things there that live. x. 269.

† **Note on the word spirit.**

Milton uses the word spirit (and thus its derivatives) to fill indifferently one or two places of the ten in his verse (e.g. I. 17 and 101). The first vowel cannot suffer elision under the rule of pure *r*, because it is stressed. The word is an exception. It commonly discards one *i*, the question is which. It might be the first, for the old French *espirit*, whence our word immediately derives, has become *esprit*, and we have a form *sprite*. But Milton would have written this; and we may be confident that he suppresses the second vowel, following the Italian use, which in poetry both writes and pronounces *spirito* and *spir'to*, e.g.

Mentre che l' uno spir'to questo disse. *Inf.* v. 139.

§ There is a local burring pronunciation of *r* (heard sometimes when Americans say *American*) which, when the first of the separated vowels is stressed, disguises the second : and it has been suggested that this is the account of Milton's pronunciation of *spirit*, and even supposed that the same burr caused the contraction of words like *general*, *mineral*, towards *gener'l*, *miner'l*. But Milton printed *gen'ral*, and the line, ix. 1116,

tho thus of late
Columbus found the Ame-ri-can so girt,

and the consideration of Milton's choice Italian, and of the fact that in his verse *Merit*, *prosperity*, and like words never show any sign of loss of length, will be sufficient to establish the proper reading of the word *spirit* in *P. L.* and discredit this ugly suggestion altogether. See Ap. E.

†† The pure *r* occurring in adjectives in *able*, as *tolerable* does not allow elision, the *a* taking the stress-place, see under next rule : and *misery* is always three syllables.

γ. **The third rule of pure L. Unstressed vowels before pure *l* may be elided**, as in the words Popular, populous, articulate, credulous, groveling, perilous, or **even when the *l* is written double**, as in Devillish, e. g.

(45) As one who long in pop*ulous* city pent. ix. 445.

[† Of these words, *perilous* should not be considered as losing its *i* in the burr of the *r* (parlous). See above, on this page, §.]

**The chief exercise of this elision is in the termination of words, especially adjectives in *ble*,** the *le* being treated as pronounced *el* or *'l*, e. g.

(46) His temple right against the temp*le of* God. i. 402.

(47) Arraying with reflected purp*le and* gold. iv. 596.

(48) Wandering shall in a glorious temp*le enshrine*. xii. 334, etc.

(49) Impenetrab*le*, impaled with circling fire. ii. 647.

(50) The portal shone, inimitab*le* *o*n earth. iii. 508.
(51) Son, in whose face invisib*le* *i*s beheld. vi. 681.
(52) Inextricab*le*, *o*r strict necessity. v. 528.
(53) To none communicab*le* *i*n earth or heaven. vii. 124.
(54) Invisib*le* *e*lse above all stars, the wheel. viii. 135.
(55) Foe not informidab*le*! *e*xempt from wound. ix. 486.
(56) Inhospitab*le* *a*ppear and desolate. xi. 306.
(57) Distinguishab*le* *i*n member, joint, or limb. ii. 668.

§ Adjectives in *ble* which seem to offer an alternative elision in the middle of the word, as *miserable*, suffer the elision of the termination preferably to the other, however opposed to present taste or use this may be, e. g.

(58) Innumerab*le*. *A*s when the potent rod. i. 338.
(59) Of depth immeasurab*le*. *A*non they move. i. 549.
(60) More tolerab*le*: *i*f there be cure or charm. ii. 460.
(61) To be invulnerab*le* *i*n those bright arms. ii. 812.
(62) Hung amiab*le*, *H*esperian fables true. iv. 250; cp. (72), (78), (86), (93).
(63) Invulnerab*le*, *i*mpenetrably armed. vi. 400.
(64) So unimaginab*le*, *a*s hate in Heaven. vii. 54.
(65) Innumerab*le*; *a*nd this which yields or fills. vii. 88.
(66) They viewed the vast immeasurab*le* *a*byss. vii. 211.
(67) First man, of men innumerab*le* *o*rdained. viii. 297.
(68) Abominab*le*, *a*ccurst, the house of woe. x. 465.
(69) Scarce tolerab*le*; *a*nd from the north to call. x. 654.
(70) O miserab*le* *o*f happy! is this the end. x. 720.
(71) By Death at last; and miserab*le* *i*t is. x. 981.
(72) His heart I know, how variab*le* *a*nd vain. xi. 92.
(73) Deeds to thy knowledge answerab*le*; *a*dd faith. xii. 582.
(74) Abominab*le*, *i*nutterab*le*, *a*nd worse. ii. 626.

§§ The evidence that this is the intended elision is as follows: that such words only occur either

*First* with full value of all the syllables, and this very frequently, e. g.

(75) Thy praises, with th' innumerable [redacted] iii. 147.

(76) Me misèràblè ! which way shall I fly. iv. 73.
(77) Insupèràblè height of loftiest shade. iv. 138.
(78) Rafael, the soclàblè spirit that deigned. v. 221.
(79) Innumèràblè as the stars of night. v. 745.
(80) Among innumèràblè false, unmoved. v. 898.
(81) If answèràblè style I can obtain. ix. 20.
(82) None arguing stood ; innumèràblè hands. vi. 508.
(83) Things not reveal'd, which th' invísiblè King. vii. 122; cp. (97).
(84) Of men innumèràblè, there to dwell. vii. 156.
(85) With fry innumèràblè swarm, and shoals. vii. 400.
(86) To make her amiàblè ; on she came. viii. 484 ; cp. (62).
(87) Ye cedars, with innumèràblè boughs. ix. 1089.
(88) Insepàràblè, must with me along. x. 250.
(89) Not unagreèàblè, to found a path. x. 256.
(90) On all sides, from innumèràblè tongues. x. 507.
(91) More misèràblè ! both have sinned ; but thou. x. 930.
(92) Unuttèràblè, which the spirit of prayer. xi. 6.
(93) That I should fear ; nor soclàbly mild. xi. 234.
(94) O misèràblè mankind, to what fall. xi. 500.

And thus :—

(95) Than mi|sèrà|blè to' have | eter|nal being. ii. 98.
(96) Shoots in|vísi|blè vir|tue even to | the deep. iii. 586 ; see p. 37.
(97) To hu|man sense | the' invi|si-blè exploits. v. 565 ; cp. (83), (96), and p. 39.
(98) Of some | thing not | unsea|sònà|blè to' ask. viii. 201.

Or *Secondly*, before a vowel, as in examples (58) to (74).
Or *Thirdly*, at the end of a line, where they can make an extrametrical syllable [see (1) A. I.], e. g.

(99) Fall'n Cherub ! to be weak is misèràblè. i. 157.
In which verse the alternative would make an inferior rhythm.

(100) Bristled with upright beams innumèràblè. vi. 82.
(101) Where boldest, though to sight unconquèràblè. vi. 118.

(102) Of all our good, shamed, naked, misèràblè. ix. 1139, etc.

which are all like this unelidible,

(103) Obscured, where highest woods, impénètràblè. ix. 1086.

†† **There is only one (?) exception,** viz. the following line,

(104) Innumerable before the Almighty's throne. v. 585.

in which the word standing contracted before a consonant must suffer in the other place. See Ap. C.

††† **Note on the word evil.** In Shakespeare the word *evil* is sometimes contracted, and it has been asserted that this contraction was due to loss of the *v* and a pronunciation *eel*. But with regard to Milton's use, the facts are that *Evil* occurs some forty times uncontracted, and about eight times besides at the end of lines (uncontracted), while of the eight times that it suffers contraction or elision seven are before a vowel, and thus bring the word under the rule of final *l*. Besides this, Milton has written *knowledge of good and ill*, instead of *good and evil*, where the required elision is forbidden by a consonant. It will therefore be more regular to consider the following line,

(105) Both good and evil; good lost and evil got. ix. 1072.

as an exception, or an error of the printer for *evil and good*, or a slip of attention.

* And Milton did not use the *v* contraction of *Even*, *e'en*, for he prints *Ev'n*, as he does *Heav'n*; and thus *Ev'ning* and *Ev'n*, and *Sev'n* for *seven*, see next rule.

**δ. The fourth rule is of the elision of unstressed vowels before N.**

**e before final n does not require the n to be pure,** e. g., Heaven, even, seven, etc., such words seem to follow the analogy of the contracted (rather than elided) participle in *en*, q.v. C. II. *a*. on next page.

**other vowels, and e before n not final, re-**

**quire the n pure**: e.g. Business, hardening, original, opening, countenance, luminous, ominous, threatening, brightening, deafening, libidinous, unreasoning, etc. And this rule governs the following examples:—

(106) Whom reas*on hath* equalled, force hath made supreme. i. 248.

(107) For those rebellious; here their pris*on* ordained. i. 71.

(108) Of massy ir*on*, or solid rock, with ease. ii. 878.

and final *en* is often thus found,

(109) Earth, and the gard*en* of God, with cedars crowned. v. 260, etc.

(110) Our own begott*en*, and of our loins to bring. x. 983, etc.

**there are only (?) two exceptions**, viz. the words *prison* and *iron* are each of them contracted once before a consonant,

(111) Out of such prison, though spirits of purest light. vi. 660.

*iron*, iii. 594, might have its usual pronunciation *iern*.

* Derivatives of *seven*, etc. follow the use of the simple word, e.g. *sevenfold*, *heavenly*.

ε. **The only (?) exception to the above four rules of elision is the word** *capital*, which is contracted, ii. 924; xi. 343; and its related *Capitoline* ix. 508.

**C. Of Contractions** (treated of here for convenience), these, like elisions, are either—

**I. Of common speech. Such as the perfect tenses and participles in** *ed*, which Milton often writes *t* as pronounced: and these need no comment, but note

(112) Confus'dly, and which thus must ever fight. ii. 914 (sic).

**II. Poetical contractions.** (Such as common use has made distinct words are not reckoned, e.g. *o'er*, *e'er*.)

a. **First of these the contraction of the perfect participle in** *en*. E.g. Fall'n, ris'n, driv'n, chos'n, giv'n, eat'n, forbidd'n, etc. (see elision under *n*, and Ap. B).

β. **Second. Milton prefers the contracted form of the termination of the second person singular of verbs;** writing not only Thinkst, seekst, spakst, sawst, dwellst, etc., but eatst, foundst, commandst, which are ugly; and preferring Rememberst to Rememb'rest, Openst to Op'nest, as his theory compelled Revisitst for Revis'test.

γ. Third. The superlative termination similar in form to the last was not unfrequently contracted by Shakespeare. Milton does not contract this: in *P. L.* i. 202 he forbids it by printing *th'* for *the*. There is one exception in *P. R.*

(113) Severest temper, smooth the rugged'st brow. *P. R.* ii. 164.

δ. Fourth. **The contraction of *in the*, *of the*,** etc., common in Shakespeare, is not made use of in *P. L.* The exception *i' th' midst*, i. 224, xi. 432, stands alone.

---

SUMMARY OF FOREGOING RULES.

All the poetical elisions and contractions in *P. L.* may therefore be reduced to the following four rules:—

1. Open vowels (as interpreted).
2. Vowels separated by the liquids *l*, *n*, *r* (as defined).
3. Final *en*.
4. The 2nd pers. sing. of verbs.

The only exceptions are—

1. The word *capital* } See p. 27, under short i.
2. The word *spirit* }
3. The words *Iron*, *prison*, and *evil*, each once.
4. *I' th' midst*.

---

## (2) OF VARIETY IN NUMBER OF STRESSES.

**A. The typical line has five full stresses, e.g.**

(114) Raised ímpious wár in Heáv'n, and báttle proúd. i. 43.

† Stress has perhaps a natural tendency to be weaker in the alternate places, like music in common time, and typically the stronger stresses would be in the odd places, see (125), (126), (127). But in a five-foot metre (and this is one of its advantages) it is evident that the odd foot will contradict this and set up varieties: and all possible combinations of these are used.

**B. Lines with only four stresses. It is common for one stress in the line to be absent, or to be so much weaker than the others that it may be considered as failing.**

**I. The omitted stress may be the first,** e.g. (132), (133), and

(115) Ănd ĭn luxúrious cíties, whére the nóise. i. 498.

(116) Ăs frŏm the cénter thrice to th' útmost póle. i. 74.

† Note, the effect of this is always to weaken the line. It is therefore rare, and it is only in long poems that it can be used with good effect.

†† Initial weak feet are, like the examples above, almost always made up of two monosyllables, and a slight accent will be given in reading to the first of them, so that the foot is really inverted; see p. 19 on inversions, and on inversions of the first foot. Thus in ex. 115 a slight stress falls on the conjunction and none on the preposition. As to whether the prepositions had more stress value in Milton's time, so as to forbid this rhythm, see Ap. E.

††† The conjunction *and* often occurs in stress-places in Milton's verse, where stressing it would make the verse ridiculous. See *Par. Reg.* lines 99–109.

**II. The stress may be omitted in the second place,** e. g.

(117) Served ónlў tŏ discóver síghts of wóe. i. 64.
(118) Still glórioŭs, bĕfore whóm awáke I stóod. viii. 464.

† This last is perhaps an example of the **Rule of the recession, or retreating of accent,** i. e. when a disyllable accented on the last was followed immediately by another strongly accented syllable, the accent of the former was sometimes in speaking shifted back, and befóre whóm may have been read béfore whóm. But it is better to consider that there is no recession of accent in *Paradise Lost.* See for exceptions Ap. D.

This rhythm may give very beautiful verses, e. g.

(119) Nor sérved ĭt tŏ relax their sérried files. vi. 599.
(120) Our little life | Is roúndĕd wĭth a sleep. Shakespeare.

**III. Or the stress may fail in the third place,** e. g.

(121) A dúngeon hórrĭblĕ on áll sides róund. i. 61.

† The failure of the middle stress divides the line into two equal parts; which rhythm was much used by Pope for the exhibition of antithesis, etc. Thousands of monotonous lines since run in this manner,

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| (122) The fríar hóoded | ănd the | mónarch crówned. | *Ess. on M.* |
| „ cóbbler ápron | „ „ | párson gówn. | *ib.* |
| „ ánts' repúblic | „ „ | réalm of bées. | *ib.* |
| „ rápt'rous móment | „ „ | plácid hóur. | *Byron.* |
| „ fówl doméstic | „ „ | hoúsehold dóg. | *Wordsw.* |

**IV. Or the fourth place may fail.** This is very common, e. g.

(123) Sole reigning, holds the tyrănnў of heaven. i. 124.

**V. Or the fifth place may be weak; but here the close of the line will give a conventional stress,** e. g.

(124) No líght; but ráther darkness vísiblè. i. 63.

**C. Some lines have only three full stresses,** e.g.

(125) His mínĭstĕrs of véngeăncе ănd pursúit. i. 170.

(126) The sójoŭrnĕrs of Góshĕn whŏ behéld. 309.

(127) Transfíx ŭs tŏ the bóttŏm ŏf this gulf. 329.

In many cases a weak place in such lines is balanced or accounted for by strengthening (even to stressing) the normally unstressed syllable, which is attached to the next following stress. See again Ap. D.

## (3) OF INVERSION OF RHYTHM.

**Blank verse is typically in rising rhythm;** i. e. the stress is regularly on the even syllables, as in ex. (114).

**But the rhythm is sometimes falling; i. e. the stress may be** shifted on to the odd syllable in any place in the line. It is then described as **inverted.**

† **Of inverted stress. Inversions of stress** in all places except the first disturb the rhythm so as to call attention to the word which carries the irregular stress: they are therefore used primarily in relation to the sense (see the following examples (a)). But in a long poem like *P. L.* the more common inversions soon become as familiar to the ear as is the typical rhythm; they then fall into the condition of the inversion of the first foot, and enliven the rhythm without taxing the sense (see the following examples (b)).

†† Inversion is most common in the 1st foot, next in the 3rd and 4th, very rare in 2nd, and most rare in 5th.

**I. Inversions of first foot.** This inversion does not affect the sense, but it freshens the rhythm, e.g.—

(128) Régions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace. i. 65.

† As a general rule, when the first foot is weak [see (2) B. I.] it will strengthen itself by a slight conventional inversion in spite of the sense, e.g.

(129) We shall be free. i. 259 and (146), (147).

†† This behaviour of the initial foot accounts also for all inversions which follow periods in the sense.

**II. Inversion of the second stress, e. g.**

(130) (a) A mind *nót to* be changed by time or place. i. 253.
(131) (a) Me, me *ónly*, just object of his ire. x. 936.
(132) To the *gárden* of bliss, thy seat prepared. viii. 299.
(133) In the *vísions* of God. It was a hill. xi. 377. See p. 37.

**III. Inversion of third stress, e. g.**

(134) (a) For one restraint, *lórds of* the world besides. i. 32.
(135) (b) Which, tasted, works *knówledge* of good and evil. vii. 543.

**IV. Inversion of fourth stress, e. g.**

(136) (a) Illumine; what is low, *ráise and* support. i. 23.
(137) (a) As when two polar winds, *blówing* adverse. x. 289.
(138) Before thy fellows, amb*ítious* to win. vi. 160.
(139) (b) From noon, and gentle airs, *dúe at* their hour. x. 93.

**V. Inverted fifth stress.** This is very rare, and does not so much emphasise the word which carries it, as it imparts strangeness to the sentence, well used in the following examples:—

(140) Beyond all past example and fúture. x. 840.
(141) Which of us who beholds the bright súrface. vi. 472.

† Some poets say that this rhythm is impossible, and was not intended; and would accent future and surface on the last; and so they must accent *prostráte* in

(142) Of Thrones and mighty Seraphim próstrate. vi. 841.

though Milton always uses *fúture* and *próstrate*, and there is said to be no other example of *surface* in literature. If it be argued that these words, being compounds or Latin, do not forbid the distortion, it may be that they were chosen to give such readers an option; and this would cover

(143) Spoiled Principalities and Powers, tríumphed. x. 186.

for this verb is accented either way. See *Comus* 974. But 141 is a very beautiful inversion, and 142 is descriptive. It would have been strange if Milton had never used this rhythm, for there are several ways by which it is naturally arrived at, especially from our reading classical iambic verse.

†† The above inversions, as all other variations of rhythm, owe their value to the presupposed metrical type from which they vary: but they must not be disguised by reading a conventional stress in the regular place. The rhythm is determined by them, and the metre is not falsified for two reasons, first, because the interruption is not long enough, the verse immediately returning to the original rhythm; and second, because a majority of verses enforce the impression of the type.

**VI. There may be more than one inversion in the same line.**

***α.* Examples of inversion of 1st and 2nd.** See p. 36.

(144) (a) Únivérsal reproach, far worse to bear. vi. 34.

(145) Bý the wáters of life, where'er they sat. xi. 79.

***β.* Of 3rd and 4th.**

(146) (a) As a despite dóne agáinst the Most High. vi. 906.

***γ.* Of 2nd and 4th.**

(147) (b) In their tríple degrees; régions to which. v. 750.

In these last two examples the weak first foot is also inverted. See above, I. † on p. 19.

**Note.** There are two points to observe in Milton's manner of using his rules of elision. **First**, that the rules being in every case only permissive, he indicates no rule for their use; their application is arbitrary. We read on the same page:

(148) To whom Mi|chael thus, | he al|-so moved, | replied. xi. 453.

(149) To whom | thus Mi|cha-el; | Death thou | hast seen. 466.

Again, after

The im|age of | a brute,

we have

(150) Th' image | of God | in man, | crea|ted once. xi. 508 and cp. vii. 527.

Again, the substantive *Being* suffers elision,

(151) That gave | thee being, | still shades | thee, and | protects. ix. 266.

while the less important participle has sometimes its full value,

(152) His violence | thou fearst | not, be|-ing such | ix. 282, etc. etc.

**Second**, that Milton came to scan his verses one way, and read them another. The line quoted above (150), and add IV. 805, must be read, *The ím|age of Gód* | like *The sá|vour of Déath* | (44), and *A píl|lar of state* | (38). Again, the line

(153) Of rain|bows and | starry eyes. | the wa|ters thus,

must be read,

Of raín|bows and stár|ry eyés. | the wá|ters thus. vii. 446.

In example (96) there scanned, we must read

Shóots in|vísible | vírtue | éven to | the deep;

compare also what is said on *Samson*, p. 44.

We may say generally that Milton's system in *Par. Lost* was an attempt to keep blank verse decasyllabic by means of fictions: or (if we suppose that he admitted the principle of *metrical equivalence*,—i. e. the principle by

which a place, which can be occupied by a long syllable, may admit two short ones in its stead, see App. F), it may be said that he formulated the conditions most common to those syllables which experience shewed were oftenest and best used for trisyllabic places; and then worked within the line which he had thus drawn.

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**On the caesura or break in the verse.**

Like the classic metres which have the caesura fixed by rule, a blank verse in English tends to divide itself into two balancing parts; and a natural rhythmical division may generally be felt in lines which contain no grammatical pause. But where there is any grammatical pause it is that which determines the break.

Now since blank verse is a system of short sentences of all possible variety of length, fitted within the frame of a five-foot metre, the tendency of the break towards the middle part of the verse is easily lost; and when the verse is handled in a masterly manner the break may occur well in any part of the line. It is necessary, therefore, to discard the word caesura, with its precise signification, and call this division in blank verse **the break.**

In the following illustrations consider the verse as of ten syllabic units, and the break to occur between the two components of ten which are given to represent the verse; thus,

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(154) Of man's first dis-o-be-dience, and the fruit

is a 7 + 3 line: i.e. the break occurs between the 7th and 8th syllables: seven before it and three after.

Here is an example of the relation between sentences and metre in an elaborate passage. The following sentences:

* * * Harmonious numbers: 5 syllables.
As the wakeful bird sings darkling, 8 „
And in shady covert hid, 7 „
Tunes her nocturnal note. 6 „
Thus with the year seasons return; 8 „
But not to me returns day, 7 „
Or the sweet approach of even or morn. 9 „

Make the verses,

(155) Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird [5+5]
(156) Sings darkling, and in shady covert hid, [3+7]
(157) Tunes her nocturnal note. Thus with the year [6+4]
(158) Seasons return, but not to me returns [4+6]
(159) Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn. iii. 38 *sq.* [1+9]

The above and the following will give examples of all the **nine single breaks,**

(160) Join voices all ye living souls: ye Birds. v. 197. [8+2]
* * * Firm they might have stood
(161) Yet fell: remember and fear to transgress. vi–end. [2+8]
* * * Such as in their souls infixed
(162) Plagues: they astonished all resistance lost. vi. 838. [1+9]
(163) And bush with frizzled hair implicit: Last [9+1]
Rose as in dance the stately trees, etc. vii. 323.

Observe in the last three examples how the break emphasizes the sense.

† The early defenders of *Par. Lost*, when still fewer than fit, were scandalised by the verse 1 + 9. This should be remembered in possibly analogous cases by those who now sit in their critical seats.

**Double breaks.**

**There are sometimes two or more breaks in a line:** the frequence of these, with the severity of the

breaks, is a distinction of Milton's verse. The following are some examples. It is not always possible to say whether a verse has one or two breaks; readers would differ.

(164) Hail Son of God, Saviour of men! Thy name. iii. 412. [4+4+2]

(165) Instruct me, for thou knowst; Thou from the first. i. 19. [3+3+4]

(166) Shall grieve him, if I fail not, and disturb. i. 167. [3+4+3]

(167) Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest. iii. 10. [2+5+3]

Ex. (128) is [5+3+2]

These are indications of the varieties, which are numberless; for when the metrical components of a verse are parts of sentences the other parts of which go to the composition of the next verses before and after, the breaks of such verses cannot be considered apart: and were these varieties exhausted, the variations of these as effected by the position of weak or inverted stresses would remain to reckon, before the changes possible in the mere formal rhythm, apart from all that is introduced by the language, were enumerated. It is few who will pursue this path any further.

P.S.—It should be added that any consideration of Milton's rhythm or versification in *P. L.* should exclude those passages where he follows the Authorised Version of the Bible—especially where the speaker is the Deity. Reverence for the text has made him insert it almost unaltered, the lines are often as bad as they can be, and one of them does not scan at all. There is probably no satisfactory way out of the difficulty.

ON

# THE PROSODY OF *PARADISE REGAINED* AND *SAMSON AGONISTES*.

*Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* were written some time after the completion of *Paradise Lost*, and the examination of their metre and rhythm is therefore of great interest, as it must divulge to us whether Milton was satisfied with the rules by which he had bound himself in his long poem ; and, if he was not, in what direction he was inclined to alter them. Such an enquiry will show that Milton did not think it worth while to keep strictly to his laws of 'elision,' but that he approved of the great rhythmical experiments which he had made, and extended these.

In examining these two poems, I shall arrange the matter in two chapters; in the first I will give all the examples which show departure from the rules of prosody tabulated from *Paradise Lost*; in the second I will give an account of the metrical and rhythmical system of *Samson*, which contains Milton's most elaborate and artificial versification.

## CHAPTER I.

### ON THE RELAXATION WHICH IS FOUND IN *Paradise Regained* AND *Samson Agonistes* OF THE LAWS OF 'ELISION' SO CALLED IN *Paradise Lost*.

THERE are altogether only about a score of exceptions to the old rules: so that they would seem to indicate a cession of principle rather than a change of practice, if it were not for the rarity in

all good verse of such examples as here present themselves. None of the following lines would have been admitted into *Paradise Lost*:

(1) The worst of all indign*i*ties yet on me. *S. A.* 1341.
(2) The rest was magnanim*i*ty to remit. 1470.
(3) And he in that calam*i*tous prison left. 1480.
(4) Thy pol*i*tic maxims or that cumbersome. *P. R.* iii. 400.
(5) With youthful courage and magnan*i*mous thoughts. *S. A.* 524.
(6) She 's gone, a man*i*fest serpent by her sting. 997.
(7) But prov*i*dence or instinct of nature seems. 1545.
(8) And all the flour*i*shing works of peace destroy. *P. R.* iii. 80.
(9) Wilt thou, then, serve the Phil*i*stines with that gift. *S. A.* 577.
(10) Soaked in his en*e*mies blood; and from the stream. 1726.
(11) Present in temples at idol*a*trous rites. 1378.
(12) Drunk with idol*a*try, drunk with wine. 1670.
(13) The close of all my mis*e*ries and the balm. 651.

Of the above, the first four examples are all of them instances of short *i* being admitted into the fiction of elision before *t*, as in the word *capital*, which was the only exception in *Paradise Lost* (see p. 15, *e.*, and note also that the word *spirit*, see p. 10, might be reckoned in this class of words): and *capital* itself occurs contracted again in *Samson*, lines 394 and 1225. In the following line, moreover, the *it* elision is made between two words, just as in *Paradise Lost* liquid terminations were 'elided' before initial vowels (see p. 10, exx. 38–44 and p. 11, exx. 46, et seq.)

(14) In slavish hab*it*, ill-fitted weeds. *S. A.* 122.

The examples 5 to 9 are a further extension; the short *i* standing before other consonants than *t*: and 8 and 9 are, I should say, instances of the theory of the shortness of this *i* being allowed to override the verdict of the ear.

The examples 10 to 12 are all from *Samson*, and they look at first as if the vowel and liquid elision theory had been quite discarded. But this conclusion would not be justified, for if exx. 5,

10, and 20 be taken together, all is explained by supposing that Milton now recognised the claim of *m* to be a liquid admitting elision; and that the word *idolatry*, which alone remains to be accounted for, is an exception. It has been suggested to me that that word had very probably acquired among the puritans a fixed and recognised pronunciation which Milton would have had pleasure in adopting. But, in any case, these examples point to the conclusion that Milton was less strict with himself, and they reduce the condition of his trisyllabic feet very near to the common use.

Example 13 contradicts Milton's consistent pronunciation of *misery*. Elsewhere he always insists on all the three syllables, which is the more expressive pronunciation of the word.

[The first of the examples given above is quite exceptional in Milton's verse, for it has an uncertainty both of rhythm and scansion. Besides that suggested, there are two other possible explanations of its prosody. The first of these is that the line has an extrametrical syllable at the end, and an inverted fifth foot, thus—

The worst | of all | indig|nities | ẏet on (me).

This is good rhythm, and best supported by the sense; for the stress is awkward on *on*, and is not really wanted on *me*. The whole passage is powerful, and well carries this unusual rhythm, which was suggested to me independently by two readers. It must be remembered also that it is not unlikely that the existence of an alternative rhythm may be in favour of an unusual one (see above, p. 20). The second alternative is the rhythm which is most likely to be given to it;

The worst | of all | indig|nities | yet ón (me).

As stated before, the accenting of *on* is awkward, but there are these lines more or less in favour of it—

(15) That fault I take not ón me, but transfer. 241.

(16) Or rather flight, no great advantage ón me. 1118.

The reader may choose for himself.]

The following lines are examples of an initial *y* being treated as a vowel, as was allowed with *w* (see p. 9, ex. 35, etc.).

(17) Justl*y*, *y*et despair not of his final pardon. 1171.

(18) Some way or oth*er y*et further to afflict thee. 1252.

(19) Whose offspring in his territor*y y*et serve. *P. R.* iii. 375.

In the last of these lines it has been suggested that Milton intended an 'elision' of the *o* of *territory*. But it is not his practice to neglect the length of a vowel—(comp. his respect for the *ā* of *miserable*, etc., p. 12, etc.)—and it cannot be supposed here.

There are left only two lines which exhibit novelties: the first is

(20) To sóme|thing éx|traór|diná|ry my thóughts | 1383.

This is the evident rhythm and scansion of the line, like ex. 5 above. It is without parallel in all the verse of *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, there being in the fifth place a trisyllabic foot, which is not resoluble by the fictions. But it is interesting to see how easily these might be extended: for here are two unstressed vowels, the first of which is short, separated by a liquid, in every respect corresponding to the conditions allowed, except in this, that the liquid is not terminal, but initial to the second vowel. As it is, it stands alone in Milton, and there can be little doubt that the sense provoked it. It may at first seem childish to assert that 'something extraordinary' in the sense determined something extraordinary in the prosody: yet to deny this requires the acceptance of an unlikely alternative; we must believe that at the crisis in the poem where Samson declares that he feels within him the divine impulse, which leads to the catastrophe of the tragedy, there occurs, by accident, a unique liberty in the author's prosody. This improbability is much increased when we consider how Milton's rhythm is always ready to follow his thought; a habit with him so essential to his style and so carefully trained, that a motive, like that which this passage carries, could hardly have been passed over without some exceptional treatment.

The other and last novelty is the line

(21) Out, out, | Hyæ(na)! | thése are | thy won|ted arts. 748

and here apparently is the extrametrical syllable returned to its place (see p. 7. II, and Appendix A); at least so the rhythm will read, however the prosody be explained. But the system of prosody in *Samson* plainly forbids extrametrical syllables in the midst of the line, and there is certainly no other example. Unless, therefore, we suppose that there is here such an extrametrical syllable admitted by oversight, or allowed as unlikely to introduce any uncertainty into the prosody (which it does not), we must receive one or other of the following scansions to justify the verse; either

Out out | Hyéna | thése are | thy won|ted arts

i. e., with 2nd and 3rd feet inverted, and 'elision' of the first syllable of Hyæna, or

Out out | Hyæ|na these | are thy won|ted arts,

with 'elision' of *y* before *w* in the fourth foot. The extreme lengths to which such fictions of scansion are pushed in *Samson* independently of the rhythm (see later on, p. 44) would admit the first of these explanations. But whatever scansion be taken it is of no importance, the line is not in the condition of ex. 1, in which both rhythm and scansion are in doubt, for the rhythm here is unmistakeable, the doubt is only how it is intended to be justified in prosody.

The above are, I believe, all the exceptions in these poems to the laws which govern the trisyllabic places in *Paradise Lost*. The reader may therefore draw his own conclusions. I will state my own, which have changed somewhat since I came to tabulate them.

I conclude that after writing *Paradise Lost*, Milton—

First, extended his rule of liquids to include *m*.

Secondly, that he has once extended the liberty of 'elision' between two words to include cases in which the liquid was initial to the second word.

Thirdly, that as he used *cap'tal* and *spir't* in *Paradise Lost*, he now generally regarded a short *i* before pure *t* as specially short and elidible, and even once allowed this 'elision' between separate words.

Fourthly, that he admitted the short *i* occurring before other consonants into trisyllabic places.

Fifthly, that he treated initial *y* as a vowel.

Lastly, if these extensions of his rules be admitted, there are only two exceptions, one the use of idol*a*trous and idol*a*try, of which an explanation is suggested (and see later, p. 45): the other the probable occurrence of an extrametrical syllable within the line.

To these should be added the exception, ex. 113, on p. 16.

On the other hand it may be said with truth, that, taking Milton's poems together, they do not differ much on these points from the poems of other good writers; that in all the best blank verse the trisyllabic feet are made up almost exclusively of open vowels, or vowels separated by liquids; and that, after these, the most frequent condition is that of short *i*. But if my statements are true, I think it impossible to doubt that in *Paradise Lost* Milton purposely excluded all trisyllabic feet but those made by open vowels and three liquids, and that he afterwards relaxed this rule to admit *m* and short *i*: and if he did not consciously exclude other short vowels—a conclusion which his early verse does not support—his practice must then have been guided solely by his ear, in which case it is still more worthy of attention.

Here are a few examples of the licences which Milton rejected—

> Like to a vag*a*bond flag upon the stream. *Ant. Cleop.* i. 4.
> To try thy el*o*quence, now 'tis time: dispatch. iii. 10.
> Even in the visions of her el*o*quent sleep. *Shelley. Islam.*
> Of flowering par*a*sites, did spring love to dress. *Shelley. Islam.*

## CHAPTER II.

### AN ACCOUNT OF THE METRICAL SYSTEM OF *Samson Agonistes.*

THE opinions which critics have ventured on the versification of the choruses in *Samson Agonistes* would be sufficient proof that they had met with something not well understood, even if they had never misinterpreted the rhythm. It is not less than an absurdity to suppose that Milton's carefully-made verse could be unmusical: on the other hand it is easy to see how the far-sought effects of the greatest master in any art may lie beyond the general taste. In rhythm this is specially the case; while almost everybody has a natural liking for the common fundamental rhythms, it is only after long familiarity with them that the ear grows dissatisfied, and wishes them to be broken; and there are very few persons indeed who take such a natural delight in rhythm for its own sake, that they can follow with pleasure a learned rhythm which is very rich in variety, and the beauty of which is its perpetual freedom to obey the sense and diction. And this also is true, that some knowledge of the structure, or laws which govern such rhythms is necessary to most persons before they will receive them as melodious; and they will accept or reject a rhythm to which they are unaccustomed, according as they can or cannot perceive, or think they perceive, its structure. This attitude towards beauty of any kind is not the best, but I am not concerned with that, or its cause; my undertaking, however, in this particular case, is to indulge it, and to put the reader into such a comfortable and assured state of mind with regard to the structure of the verse in *Samson*, as will enable him to encounter its rhythms with a good conscience. The rhythms themselves I do not intend to discuss, that is, I shall not try to throw light on such questions, as why such a rhythm is beautiful in itself, or why it follows such

another. But if I enable the reader to scan the verses, and, if he choose, count and name the metrical units, I may expect that he will then feel himself free to admire the rhythms. If he still cannot do so, that may be my fault or his, but it cannot be Milton's.

The present chapter will therefore be an account of the elemental structure of the verse of *Samson Agonistes*. I shall begin by getting rid of what I believe to be the chief source of misunderstanding.

No one has ever found any difficulty in the metre or rhythm of the poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*: they are 'universally crowned with highest praises,' and are held to be masterpieces of musical writing. In these poems, setting aside their irregular openings, there are two kinds of line, one the eight-syllable line with rising stress (so-called iambic), the other the seven-syllable line with falling stress (so-called trochaic), this latter being exactly like the former with the first syllable omitted. But if we examine a passage from one of these poems, we shall find that there is also a third kind of line, which intermediates between the other two types, and that this is made by the simple device of inverting the first foot of the eight-syllable line; thus,—

And oft, | as if | her head | she bowed,
Stooping | through a | fleecy | cloud.
Oft, on | a plat | of ri|sing ground,
I hear | the far | off cur|feu sound,
Over | some wide- | watered | shore,
Swinging | slow with | sullen | roar.

Of these six lines the first and fourth are regular eight-syllable lines with rising stress ('iambic'), and the second, fifth, and sixth are regular seven-syllable lines with falling stress ('trochaic'); but the third is an eight-syllable line with the first stress inverted, or falling, and it begins as if it were going to be a seven-syllable line (trochaic) throughout, and it reads equally well (for the two things are identical) as a line of falling stress (trochaic) with

a trisyllabic foot (so-called dactyl) in the first place. Its structure is

Oft' on | a plát | of ri|sing gróund,

but by the inversion of the first foot it reads as if it were scanned thus

Oft' on a | plát of | rísing | gróund.

Such an example as the above offers no difficulty, and it has, as I have said, never given rise to any difference of opinion as to its metrical device; but it is clear that if there was an optional elision in the first foot, it would not only be possible to take it in these two ways, but impossible to say which was the better explanation. If, for instance, we substitute such a disyllable as *Softly* for the words *Oft on*, thus

Softly a plat of rising ground,

it is clear that, according as we admit or refuse an elision of the open *y* before the *a*, we have a seven-syllable line with falling stress throughout, or an eight-syllable line of rising stress with the first foot inverted; that is either

Softly | a plat | of ri|sing ground,

or

Softl*y a* | plat of | rising | ground.

I wish the reader to perceive that a verse in this condition is under no uncertainty of rhythm: there is no doubt how the verse is to be read and stressed, but there are two possible ways of explaining its metrical structure: and it is merely a matter of convenience in classification which one we take.

Now this condition occurs in *Samson* complicated by these further conditions, that the inversions are not confined to the first foot of the line, and the lines are of various lengths: and Milton has purposely used these liberties together, on account of their rhythmical resources, in order to introduce what are called dactylic (that is true trisyllabic verse-) rhythms into his verse, which is all the while composed strictly of disyllabic feet.

In such verse as I have quoted from *Il Penseroso*, where the

eight-syllable and seven-syllable systems are mixed together, it is the method of some metrists to regard all the lines, whether rising or falling, as being composed of the same metrical units, and differing only by the insertion or not of an unaccented initial syllable. This way is very simple, and if rhythmic stress in poetry be regarded as equivalent to accent in musical rhythm, and the metrical units be counted as measured bars or half-bars, it may be used as an explanation. In Chaucer's ten-syllable verse the first syllable is sometimes omitted—(just as it is in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*)—as has lately been remarked by the critics, who, as far as I know, do not recognise it in Shakespeare: and those who prefer to look at the matter in this way, will thus explain the odd-syllable verse of *Samson*. But just in proportion as the line is invaded by inversions, the explanation ceases to be satisfactory, and I shall in this chapter always distinguish falling rhythms ('trochaic') from rising ('iambic') rhythms with inversions. The distinction is of more importance in analysis than the theoretic likeness.

Now in *Samson Agonistes*, if all the lines of falling rhythm (so-called trochaic, or lines which lack the initial syllable) be recognised and separated from the rest,—and there are only 19 in all the 1758,—it will be found that the whole of the poem, with those exceptions, is composed in rising rhythm, of regular disyllabic feet (so-called iambs) with free liberty of inversions, and weak places, and 'elisions,' and extrametrical syllables at the end of the line, all such as we found in *Paradise Lost*. The whole of the 'dactylic' and 'trochaic' effects are got by the placing of the inversions, elisions, etc.; and where the 'iambic' system seems entirely to disappear, it is maintained as a fictitious structure and scansion, not intended to be read, but to be imagined as a time-beat on which the free rhythm is, so to speak, syncopated, as a melody.

Firstly, these are the 19 lines in falling rhythm: they are all of them in the choric or lyric verse.

(1) Lét us | nót break | ín u|pón him. 116.

(2) Thát he|róick | thát re|nówned. 125.

(3) Ór the | sphére of | fórtune | ráises. 172.
(4) Ó that | Tórment | shoúld not | bé con|fíned. 606.
(5) Tó the | bódy's | woúnds and | sóres. 607.
(6) Bút must | sécret | pássage | find. 610.
(7) Ás on | éntrails | jóints and | límbs. 614.
(8) Ás a | línger|íng dis|eáse. 618.
(9) Liké a | státely | shíp. 714.
(10) Ánd ce|léstial | vígour | ármed. 1280.
(11) Gréat a|móng the | héathen | róund. 1430.
(12) Ín the | cámp of | Dán. 1436.
(13) Whíle their | héarts were | jócund | ánd sub|líme. 1668.
(14) Líke that | sé¹f-be|gótten | bird. 1699.
(15) Ín the' A|rábian | wóods em|bóst. 1700.
(16) Thát no | sécond | knóws nor | thírd. 1701.
(17) All' is | bést though | wé oft | dóubt. 1745.
(18) Whát the' un|seárcha|blè dis|póse. 1746.
(19) Oft' he | séems to | híde his | fáce. 1749.

Of the above lines 4 and 13 are like Chaucer's nine-syllable lines; that is, if an initial syllable were added, they would be ordinary ten-syllable 'blank' verses. In 5 and 12, if contraction were allowed of the words *to the* and *in the*, these two lines could be reckoned as in rising rhythm; while in 15 and 18 if the marked 'elisions' be neglected, the lines become regular eight-syllable lines with an inversion of the first foot. But of these number 12 is the only line in which the falling ('trochaic') rhythm can be doubted as the poet's intention.

Having dismissed these lines, the whole of the rest of the poem is to be explained as in rising disyllabic (iambic) metres, broken by inversions, etc.

And first I will take all the instances of the most peculiar rhythm which is obtained by these inversions, that is when the first two feet of the line are inverted: here are the lines, eleven in number:—

(20) Írre|cóvera|bly dárk, | tótal | eclípse. 81.

In this verse there is also inversion of the fourth foot.

(21) Ór b*y* e|vásions | thy críme | uncó|verst móre. 842.
(22) Írre|sísti|ble Sám|son? whóm | unármed. 126.
(23) Thát in|vínci|ble Sám|son, fár | renówned. 341.

(and compare with these two last

(24) Samson | should be | brought fórth | to shów | the péo(ple) 1605.)
(25) Úni|vérsal|ly crówned | with hígh|est prái(ses). 175.
(26) Fór his | péople | of óld ; | what hín|ders nów. 1533.
(27) Ó how | cómely | it ís, | and hów | revi(ving). 1268.
(28) Tó the | spírits | of júst | men lóng | opprésséd. 1269.
(29) Púts in|vínci|ble míght | 1271.
(30) Ánd with | blíndness | intér|nal strúck | 1690.

and add to these examples 83 and 89 *q.v.*

I will say about each one of these lines what is to be urged against this view of their metrical construction: but first, in favour of the explanation that they are all instances of inversion of the first two feet, I will give examples of similar rhythm from *Paradise Lost* and *Regained.*

(31) Úni|vérsal | reproách, | far worse | to bear. *P. L.* vi. 34.
(32) Bý the | wáters | of lífe, | where'er | they sat. xi. 79.
(33) Ín the | bósom | of blíss, | and light | of light. *R.* iv. 597.
(34) Tó the | gárden | of bliss, | their seat | prepared. *L.* viii. 299.
(35) Áfter | fórty | days fás|ting had | remained. *R.* ii. 243.
(36) Throúgh the | ínfi|nite host : | nor less | for that. *L.* v. 874.
(37) Shóots in|vísi|ble vir|t*ue* éven to | the deep. *L.* iii. 586.

This has, like 20, an inversion also of the fourth foot. And add examples 133 and 147 on pp. 20 and 21 and these less marked lines.

(38) Ádam, | well may | we la|bour still | to dress. ix. 205.
(39) Lábour, | as to | debar | us when | we need. 236.
(40) Góing | into | such dan|ger as | thou saidst. 1157.

Of these ten lines from the epic verse, most of the examples

are indubitable, and prove that the rhythm is one which we should expect to find; while the extreme pathos of it in ex. 20, where it is impossible to make any other rhythm, the fact that in 22, 23, and 24 it is used as expressive of the bond-bursting Samson, the absolute necessity for allowing it in 30, and the appearance of it in those weaker examples connected with labour and danger, 38, 39 and 40, all together make a strong case for admitting the explanation to cover all the examples given.

But it may have been observed that in three of these 21 lines the words *irresistible* or *invincible* occur, and since 'elision' of the short *i* is allowed in Samson (see p. 27), it might be suspected here as a preferable explanation. And these examples, i. e. 22, 23, and 29, might, if there were no considerations to determine otherwise, be all scanned as odd-syllable lines containing elision of the short *i*; and thus

Ir|resis|t'ble Sam|son whom | unarmed.
That | invín|c'ble Sam|son far | renowned,

would be Chaucerian nine-syllable lines, just like examples 4 and 13 above from the chorus. But this, as I said before, makes no difference to the rhythm: the chief objection to such an explanation is that it does not explain all the lines. It is true that examples 25, 26, 27, 28, 34, 36, and 37, are in the same condition with these other four, for these lines also all contain a possible elision or contraction: but the contraction of *univers'lly* in 25 would be unparalleled, and examples 20, 21, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 35, which are all decided cases, would still be left: so that it is more convenient to group them together as above.

But no metrical explanation which does not falsify the rhythm is in itself objectionable; what is wrong is to read these lines *Irrécoverably, Irrésistible, That invincible* or *c'ble, Universally, O how comely, Puts in-vincible, Universal reproach, Shoots invisible.* It would not be worth while to mention such barbarous distortions, if some of them had not been actually proposed and received by scholars. In face of their authority the

student may wish to know how Milton uses these words in other places, and looking up in the concordance all the passages where they occur, I find for *Irresistible*, which seems chosen as a word that enforced its accent, this single line

(41) Of union irresistible, moved on. *P. L.* vi. 63.

As for *invincible*, the word occurs in five other places and begins the line in every one but the following

(42) Thy temperance, invincible besides. *P.* ii. 408.

*Universal* occurs in twenty-one other places, and always with its ordinary accent, and again seems as if it was chosen because it could not be misread.

*Invisible* occurs in all fourteen times. Its position in eleven of these makes any other than its proper pronunciation impossible. One of the remaining three is example 37 above; the other two are—

(43) To human sense th' invisible exploits. *P. L.* v. 565.

(44) Things not | revealed, | which th' in|visible king. vii. 122.

Both these lines are printed with the elision of *the* in the first edition[1], which excludes the contraction *invis'ble*, and in example 43 gives *invisible*. No. 44, if it stood alone, would sustain the Chaucerian *invisible*; but there is no doubt that an inversion of the fourth foot is here intended to enforce the mystery of the sense. Compare ex. 72, p. 57.

*Infinite* occurs in all twenty-three times. In twenty-one its common accentuation is necessary; of the other two, one is

(45) Infinite wrath, and infinite despair. iv. 74.

which contains an inversion of the first foot, as example 36, which is the other case, does of the second.

It would be difficult to find words the stress of which is better fitted to secure the inversion of the rhythm, or the usage of which in the poem is better established. I have also in one or two cases pointed out the relation which their rhythmical effect bears to the sense. The meaning in 22 and 23 must strike

[1] I use the 'facsimile reproduction' of Elliot Stock, 1877.

everyone. In examples 32, 33 and 34, it seems to introduce a lyrical wave, the contradiction of which to the epic flow of the verse may suggest a remoteness of beauty very like the idea in the words; and we have the very same condition of things in ex. 133, p. 20. But, not to say anything which might appear fanciful, I leave this suggestion to the reader, and refer him generally to the chorus on p. 42.

The next peculiarity of rhythm which I will take is the twelve-syllable verse, or line with six stresses. These verses occur in the lyrical parts only of *Samson*: there are some twenty-six in all. It is usually considered that this line (sometimes called an Alexandrine) must have a break or caesura in the middle, between the sixth and seventh syllables. It is best known in this form, and the break is commonly so well marked, that in free unrhymed verse it is indistinguishable from a pair of six-syllable lines. The characteristic of Milton's twelve-syllable line is his neglect of this break, and he makes a verse which has a strong unity in itself, and no tendency to break up. In fact, though he allows himself the same liberty of caesura or break in this as he does in his ten-syllable verse (see p. 23), yet his 'Alexandrine' is more coherent, as if it was composed expressly to counteract its tendency to divide into two. And here I should think that there was probably another stumbling-block for readers of *Samson*, if it were not for the great popularity of Milton's *Nativity Ode*, where the twelve-syllable lines that close the stanzas are made in the same way, and, with other examples of his early verse, show that he always took the same view of the rhythm of this line. Here are a few well-known lines from the Ode:—

(46) And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.

(47) Swindges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

(48) The sable-stolèd sorcerers bear his worshipt ark.

(49) She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

(50) While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmèd wave.

In *Samson* about nine of these lines are 6 + 6, with the common break, which is however often weak or disguised: four are 7 + 5

(see ex. 71): three are 8+4: one is 4+5+3: one is 5+7: one is 5+3+4: and seven are continuous lines without any break. These, which are characteristic and show the sweep of the rhythm, are here given:

(51) Or groveling, soiled their crested helmets in the dust. 141.
(52) To lowest pitch of abject fortune thou art fallen. 169.
(53) To death's benumbing opium as my only cure. 630.
(54) Left me all helpless with the' irreparable loss. 644.
(55) And condemnation of the' ingrateful multitude. 696.
(56) Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil. 1035.
(57) This idol's day hath been to thee no day of rest. 1297.

This last line might be taken as an example of 4+4+4.

It should be remarked on these twelve-syllable lines that some of them may be reduced to ten-syllable lines, by reckoning the last two syllables as extrametrical (see p. 7, ex. 2).

(58) Made arms ridículous, úseless the fórgery. 131. (6+6.)
(59) Hopéless are all my évils, all remédiless. 648. (7+5.)
(60) So deal not with this once thy glorious cham(pion).
(61) The image of thy strength and mighty mínister. 706. (6+6.)

Such an explanation would be quite out of the question if the ten-syllable verse were judged by that of *Paradise Lost*, though a few lines might seem to support it; but in *Samson* Milton has used heavier endings: here are a few,—

(62) Nothing of all these evils hath befállen me. 374.
(63) Samson of all thy sufferings think the héaviest. 445.
(64) Private respects must yield with grave authórity. 867.
(65) Besides how vile, contemptible, ridículous. 1361.
(66) No better way I saw than by impórtuning. 797.
(67) Of brazen shield and spear, the hammered cúirass. 132.
(68) My són is rather slaying them: that oútcry. 1527.

and thus *thérefore, sílence, delíverance, diminútion, submíssion*, etc. The lines last quoted, and ex. 60, must all be taken as ten-syllable lines with extrametrical endings, but it is of no

consequence how (58) (59) (61) are explained, although they are almost certainly meant for twelve-syllable verses.

The reader might now take the opening of the first chorus, and see how the various lines which have been already described are put together, and how the verse, with the exception of the lines given on p. 35, is all resolved into disyllabic rising rhythm.

(69) This, this | is he; | sóftly | awhile,

an eight-syllable line, with third foot inverted; the sibilants are hushing.

(1) Lét us | nót break | ín u|pón him:

a perfect four-foot line in falling rhythm (see p. 35).

(70) O change | beyond | report, | thóught, or | belief!

a ten-syllable line, metre reflective: the fourth foot inverted for wonder.

(71) See how | he lies | at ran|dom, care|lessly | diffus'd,

the first twelve-syllable line in the poem, 7 + 5. In describing great Samson stretched on the bank, it describes itself.

(72) With lang|uish'd head | unpropt,

a six-syllable line, its shortness is the want of support.

(73) As one | past hope, | aban-(don'd),

(74) And by | himself | giv*e*n o-(ver);

two six-syllable lines, with extrametrical final syllables suggestive of negligence.

(75) In sla|vish ha|bít, ill-fit-|ted weeds

an eight-syllable line with elision in third foot: see above, p. 27, ex. 14.

(76) O'erworn | and soil'd;

a four-syllable line; its shortness and simple diction are the poverty of the subject.

(77) Or do | my eyes | misre|present? | Can this | be he,

a twelve-syllable line (8 + 4); the length of the verse suggests the crowding of new ideas.

(21) Thát he|róick, | thát re|now'ned

a seven-syllable line, the rhythm heralding

(22) Írre|sísti|ble Sam|son? whom, | unarmed,

a ten-syllable line, with first two feet inverted, descriptive of Samson's violence.

(78) No strength | of man, | nor fier|cest wild | beast, could | with-stand;

a heavy twelve-syllable line, descriptive of Samson's strength.

(79) Who tore | the li|on, as | the li|on tears | the kid;

same with break disguised. Observe how the first half of the line is more powerful than the second.

(80) Ran on | embat|tled ar|mies clad | in i(ron);

a ten-syllable line, with final extrametrical syllable. The ease of the metre after the two alexandrines is Samson's successful rush.

(81) And, wea|ponless | himself,

a six-syllable line; its shortness is Samson's nakedness and singlehandedness.

(58) Made arms | ridí|cŭloŭs, | úselĕss | thĕ fór|gĕrў

a twelve-syllable line, with fourth foot inverted, and weak ending to each half, descriptive of the failure of the preparations.

This will serve for an example. The relation of the form of the verse to the sense is not intended to be taken exactly; it is a matter of feeling between the two, and is misrepresented by any definition. Poetry would be absurd which was always mimicking the diction or the sense; but that is a different thing from matter and form being in a live harmonious relation. The above passage happens to be rich in opportunities for descriptive rhythm, and it was necessary to the purpose of this chapter to draw attention to Milton's observation of these, because this often explains what has been censured as harsh or careless irregularity in the verse. Nor have I much indulged my fancy; it will have struck many readers that in the line (ex. 75) where

Milton puts his hero in rags he must have been conscious that he was putting his verse into rags; for he always rejected such a garment as he here weaves as unworthy of his Muse.

Lastly, I will indicate a few examples of the free rhythms which are carried by the regular disyllabic structure.

Ex. 15 above reads,

Ín thĕ Ă|rábĭăn | wóods em|bóst.

(82) Príson within | príson īn|séparably | dárk. 153, 4.

which is made of two six-syllable lines, the first of which has its first and last feet inverted, the second a weak middle foot.

(83) But the heárt | of the fóol | . 298.

which is also a six-syllable line, with its first two feet inverted, and may be added to examples 20–30 above, p. 36.

(84) With toúch ethéréăl ŏf Héavĕn's fĭĕrў ród. 549.

a ten-syllable line, which reads thus by means of three elisions and one weak place.

(85) My | grĭefs nŏt ónlў | paín mĕ ás ă | lĭngĕríng dĭs|eáse. 617, 8.

a six-syllable line, with extrametrical syllable at the end, followed by a falling seven-syllable line, ex. 8, above.

(86) Mánў ăre thĕ | saўíngs ŏf thĕ | wíse. 652.

which is an eight-syllable line, with its inverted first foot containing an elision, and with a weak third foot.

(87) Témper'st thy | próvidence | thróugh his | shórt cóurse. 670.

Thus reads an ordinary ten-syllable line with first and fourth inverted.

(88) Thérefore God's universal law. 1053.

begins a passage of seven short lines every one of which has the first foot inverted, so that the whole reads as verse in falling rhythm, interspersed with 'dactyls.'

Drúnk with i|dólatry | drúnk with | wine. 1670.

This 'dactylic' verse scans thus

Drúnk with | idól|atry drúnk | with wíne,

with elision in the third foot, see p. 28. The concordance gives eight references for *idolatry*, *idolatrous*, etc., and the word has always its common accentuation; but in the two lines quoted from *Samson* (p. 27, ex. 11, 12) the third syllable is elided or contracted. There can be no doubt of this; but there is a third line, commencing also with two 'dactyls',

(89) By the idolatrous rout amidst their wine. 443,

and, given the contraction of *idolatrous* in the two other places, as Shakespeare has it,

But now he's gone, and my idol*a*trous fancy. *All W.* i. 1.

this would scan most simply with a common inversion of first foot,

Bý the | idól|*a*trous rout | amidst | their wine.

But in the first edition it is printed with elision of *the*, which gives

Bý th' i|dóla|trous roút | amidst | their wine,

and puts it among the examples of verses which invert the first two feet. I had before supposed that the elision of *the* was a mistake of the printer or his reader, but this scansion, though further fetched, is more like the rhythm: either is a fiction, and neither contradicts the rhythm.

In recognising the fictitious 'dactylic' character of some of these lines (compare also the three 'dactyls' in ex. 58), the reader must not believe, as he will sometimes find it asserted, that true 'dactylic' verse, or verse made of true trisyllabic units, was practically unknown in Milton's time. It was quite common: indeed common is the right term for it, because the greater poets thought it beneath their style. Milton was therefore not inventing anything new or unheard, but seeking rather to make a good use of natural English stress rhythms, without falling into their singsong, or setting all his verse to dance. And if it is now clear to the reader by what means he did this, there is nothing left which needs further explanation. Some criticism of Milton's method will be found in Appendix F.

# APPENDIX A.

## THE EXTRAMETRICAL SYLLABLE.

HOW does an extrametrical syllable, occurring in the midst of a line, differ from the supernumerary syllable of a common trisyllabic foot? For instance, how do these lines differ?

(1) To quench the drouth of Phœ-(bus): which as they taste. Ex. 4.

(2) To set himself in glo-*ry* above his peers. Ex. 18, p. 9.

The answer is that in the second the extra syllable is made rhythmical by its brevity, in the first it is made rhythmical by there being a pause after it.

This rhythmical explanation accounts for the prosody, and for the fact that an extrametrical syllable is often followed by an inversion.

The extrametrical syllable proper is of frequent occurrence in Shakespearian dialogue. Where a line is divided between two speakers, the second speaker often disregards the last syllable of the first speaker, and treats it as extrametrical. This was used by Shakespeare among his devices,—which increased as he perfected his art,—to prevent such a line falling pat, and to avoid the effect of the second speaker having his answer conditioned for him by the first; who being in possession of the line, ceded, as it were, only as much as he chose. Our ear has a romantic and masculine objection to any such appearance of the verse overruling the matter: and the value of a reply is actually impaired, if it seems to be led up to, and prearranged; and so *stichomythia*, as it is called, in which the speaker is bound to fill and not exceed the line, requires the art to be free from all realism whatever; a condition not often presented by our drama.

But if a line, which has in the middle of it an extrametrical syllable followed by a pause, pleases the ear, it is plain that this extrametrical syllable will have a way of coming in sometimes when it is not expected, and, in bad writers, where it is not wanted.

Also it may not be always easy to determine whether such a syllable is truly extrametrical or not, because there may be all gradations, and even a doubt whether there is a pause intended. Nor does the existence of a grammatical pause always decide the question: the lines in which Milton has made an elision across a stop, are good examples of the rhythmical conditions which lie between the extrametrical syllable proper, and simple elision. See exx. 10, 11, 12, on p. 8, and 58, 59, 65, 69, on p. 12. The theory of trisyllabic feet best suits these places: but as a question of Miltonic prosody they are all examples of 'elision.' In cases where there is doubt it is better to regard the syllable as extrametrical: the test is this, that if it is extrametrical, it does not signify to the ear whether it is long or short, though it is better for being rather long; whereas in a trisyllabic foot the quantity of the syllable makes all the difference, for it must be short, and the shorter the better.

On the other hand it is not essential that a strong grammatical pause or an inversion should follow an extrametrical syllable in a line, though this is its typical condition: the syllable itself may be introduced to make the verse to pause. The frequent occurrence of these extrametrical syllables in Shakespeare, whose later verse is restless with them,—and who may be said to have exceeded the bounds of propriety in this, as in other matters, with perfect felicity,—has given rise to mistakes[1]; for this extra syllable is often confounded with the condition of

[1] Any study of Shakespeare's versification must first of all exclude from consideration the plays which he did not write. His work should then be classified in periods or styles, and the classes examined separately. A collection of instances from all his poetry can lead to no result, because his late verse is written on a different system from his early verse.

a true trisyllabic foot, and imagined to be a bad attempt at that. Some modern writers have thus used it with a sort of affectation of antique negligence; though it never has been, nor can ever be more wretchedly abused than it was by the second-rate Elizabethans.

## APPENDIX B.

### On Elision.

Concerning the use of the term Elision in this tract: it has been taken by some that I meant that the elided syllable should be 'cut out' of the pronunciation: but I chose the term, which is in common use, because I wished not to imply any theory of prosody, as to how the supernumerary syllables were to be accounted for in rhythm. I did not think that there could be any doubt as to whether they should be pronounced. That Milton regarded his open vowels as 'elided,' like open vowels in Latin, can hardly be doubted: that is, he intended that they should not count in the scansion: yet though he printed *Th' Almighty*, etc., it cannot be supposed that he wished it to be so pronounced[1]. In English the open vowel is always pronounced: but the actual phonetic conditions of open vowels are difficult, and that of vowels separated by 'liquids' is still more so. However slightly we may pronounce the *e* in *The Almighty*, it is always heard: but what of the *e* in *wondering* and '*wonderous*'? or is that more sounded than the unwritten vowel before the *l* in *warbling*? That Milton recognised the vowel character of the semivowels is certain from his manner of writing words in which they occur: for though such forms as *assembl'd*, *resembl'st* (which should be read *resembelst* in ex. 10, p. 8), *stumbl'd*, *trembl'd*, *troubl'd*, *trampl'd*, etc., were no doubt so written to avoid the pronunciation *assem-blèd*, *resem-blest*, etc., and to

[1] On the question of the spelling and printing of the first edition of *Paradise Lost*, see Appendix E.

ensure the pronunciation *assembeld, stumbeld,* etc.; yet this does not account for such printings as *Imbattld* for *Imbatteld, op'n'd,* and *op'nd* for *open'd, reck'n'st* for *reckon'st, brok'n* for *broken,* etc., in verses where such words have their full syllabic value. And no one can read the first edition of *Paradise Lost* without seeing how difficult it is to draw a line where theoretic elision, if once admitted for open vowels, should end.

The true metrical theory of these syllables must depend not upon their spelling, but upon their speech-condition: I could not thoroughly enter into that, and so I chose a term which should imply nothing, because it could not be taken literally. Milton's practice is somewhat inconsistent or arbitrary, and may be open to various interpretations: I have not observed that it differs much from Chaucer's, and it is common to all our poetry since.

As for open vowels, putting other so-called elisions aside, one might say generally that they have a tendency in English to glide one into the other, and that this tendency may be helped or hindered in pronunciation. This quality also varies in different positions of the vowels, according as a close follows an open, or an open a close vowel; and in the same vowels it is different in different relations of stress. Where they run together most, they are like two vowels which have to be sung to one note in Italian music; and it is not their fault if our musicians have not equally respected their fluency. On the other hand they often show little tendency to glide; and it is only where the tendency to glide one into the other is strong but forbidden by the metre, that we get a condition of hiatus that is weak or unpleasant. For the same reason that I chose the term elision I purposely used it both wrongly and inconsistently, as a word of no meaning. In this edition I have corrected some expressions which may have needlessly troubled the reader. I also use the term *liquid,* as it is found in old grammars, for the four sounds r, l, n, and m. These sounds occur in combinations very difficult of exact definition, and their behaviour in English verse is a proper subject for writers on phonetics.

# APPENDIX C.

## ADJECTIVES IN *able.*

It seemed necessary to prove at length that Milton treated the *a* in these words as long, and that in the trisyllabic places in which they occur, it is the *ôl* and not the *a* which is short or 'elided,' because he is now often misread by those who are more familiar with the poetry of this century, as a few examples may show. Shelley, who generally follows Milton's use in this particular, has the *a* short here and there, e. g.

(1) The plectrum struck the chords—unconquerăblè. *H. Merc.* lxxi. 5.

(2) Like earth's own voice lifted unconquerăblỳ. *Isl.* ix. 3. 5.

(3) The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomăblỳ. *Witch.* xlix.

The following are from Rossetti,

(4) With sweet confederate music fávorăblè.

(5) Their refuse maidenhood abóminăblè.

And Rossetti does not stop here; he has

(6) The inmost incense of his sánctuărỳ.

(7) This harp still makes my name its vóluntărỳ.

To such words as these last, *i.e.* four-syllable words accented on the first, and having a long vowel in the penultimate, Milton always gives their full value, as they are heard in modern American speech: and when they occupy only three places in the verse the last syllable is elided before a vowel. There is one exception, the shortened *a* in *luminary*, vii. 385.

Ellis represents Chaucer's *able* as *aabl-* or *aab'l*; thus

(8) And ful plee·zaunt· and aa·mi̯aa·bl- of poort·e. *Prol.* 138.

and these words were thus accentuated by Chaucer, Shakespeare and Milton, and down to our time, the ā gradually lightening. It seems now a question whether they have so changed their

speech-accent, as to justify a departure from tradition in higher poetry, in face of the indisputable permanence of our classical verse. See further remarks in Ap. H. p. 76.

# APPENDIX D.

## On Recession of Accent.

Recession of accent, which was defined on p. 18, is not now heard. I have been told that it lingers in Ireland in the common speech in which it must have originated, and that Roman Catholics there will still talk of *éxtreme unction*, just as Milton has *éxtreme shift* in Comus: also that they do not say Sir Jóhn Róbinson, but Sír-john Róbinson; in the fashion in which, I suppose, our names Sinclair, Silliger, and St. John (Sínjun) arose: which tempts me to quote from Milton's sonnets,

(1) Thy age like ours, O soul of Sir John Cheek.

As regards Shakespeare the industry of Dr. Alexander Schmidt has put this question clear of conjecture. The first article in the appendix to his *Shakespeare Lexicon* is on the 'Changeable accent of disyllabic adjectives and participles.' His rule is this: that *Disyllabic adjectives and participles which are accented on the last, shift their accent to their first syllable when occurring before nouns which are accented on the first*; *provided that their own last syllable occur in the arsis*: i. e. off the verse stress. The only fault to find with this definition[1] is that it confines

[1] It might seem simpler to suppose that these words have their accent determined merely by their place in the verse: but they must of course have acquired their shifting pronunciation before the poet could have relied on their obeying the verse stress; and if, as seems probable, this came about from the perpetual contact of their final accent with the initial accent of nouns, then their position before the noun is their typical condition. But two things follow, first, that once in this unstable condition they would shift their accent under less provocation than what first displaced it, and, second, that other disyllables would imitate them.

recession of accent to adjectives and participles, and that it requires the determining (following) word to be a noun, which it is true that it is in all his instances; but I should be inclined to consider this unessential, and treat the recession as being due entirely to collision of accents. I do not see that it has anything to do with the sense, or with the adjective being in the predicate or not, as implied by Dr. Schmidt's remarks.

I will give from his examples enough to convince the reader of the real existence of this practice.

(2) He is compléte in feature and in mind. *Gent.* ii. 4. 73.
(3) Can pierce a *cómplete* bos(om). Why I desire thee. *Meas.* i. 3. 3.
(4) A maid of grace and *cómplete* majesty. *L. L. L.* i. 1. 137.
(5) Than all the *cómplete* armour that thou wear'st. *Rich.* 3rd, iv. 4. 189.
(6) Though time seem so advérse and means unfit. *Alls.* v. 1. 26.
(7) Thy *ádverse* party is thy advocate. *Sonn.* 35. 10.
(8) Therefore my verse to constancy confíned. *Sonn.* 105. 7.
(9) Supposed as forfeit to a *cónfined* doom. *Sonn.* 107. 4.
(10) Have you conspired, have you with these contrived. *Mid.* iii. 2. 196.
(11) To do no *cóntrived* murd(er): I lack iniquity. *Oth.* i. 2. 3.
(12) So then I am not lame, poor, nor despísed. *Sonn.* 37. 9.
(13) The pangs of *déspised* love, the laws delay. *Ham.* iii. 1. 72.
(14) And not the puddle in thy sea dispérsed. *Lucr.* 658.
(15) The *dispersed* air, who, holding Lucrece' life. *Lucr.* 1805.
(16) And make distínct the very breach, whereout. *Tro.* iv. 5. 245.
(17) To offend, and judge, are *dístinct* offices. *Mer.* ii. 9. 61.
(18) With *dístinct* breath and *cónsigned* kisses to them. *Tro.* iv. 4. 47.
(19) This fellow is distráct and so am I. *Err.* iv. 3. 42.
(20) Their *dístract* parcels in combined sums. *Compl.* 231 (?author).
(21) O royal knavery! an exáct command. *Ham.* v. 2. 19.
(22) To set the *éxact* wealth of all our states. 1st *Hen.* 4th, iv. 1. 46.
(23) I have with *éxact* view perused thee, Hector. *Tro.* iv. 5. 232.
(24) Let their exháled unwholesome breaths make sick. *Lucr.* 779.
(25) And be no more an *éxhaled* meteor. 1st *Hen.* 4th, v. 1. 19.

(26) To work my mind, when body's work's expíred. *Sonn.* 27. 4.
(27) An *éxpired* date, cancelled ere well begun. *Lucr.* 26.
(28) To the contrary I have expréss commandment. *Wint.* ii. 2. 8.
(29) As bid me tell my tale in *éxpress* words. *John* iv. 2. 234.
(30) Savage, extréme, rude, cruel, not to trust. *Sonn.* 129. 4.
(31) And *éxtreme* fear can neither fight nor fly. *Lucr.* 230.
(32) But qualify the fíre's *éxtreme* rage. *Gent.* ii. 7. 22.
(33) The *éxtreme* parts of time extremely forms. *L. L. L.* v. 2. 750.
(34) Tempering extremities with *éxtreme* sweet. *Rom.* ii. *Prolog.*
(35) To some forlórn and naked hermitage. *L. L. L.* v. 2. 805.
(36) And from the *fórlorn* world his visage hide. *Sonn.* 33. 7.
(37) Round rising hillocks, brakes obscúre and rough. *Ven.* 237.
(38) His means of death, his *óbscure* funeral. *Ham.* iv. 5. 213.
(39) In so profoúnd abysm I throw all care. *Sonn.* 112. 9.
(40) There's matter in these sighs, these *préfound* heaves. *Ham.* iv. 1. 1.
(41) Open the door, secúre, fool-hardy king. *R.* 2nd, v. 3. 43.
(42) Upon my *sécure* hour thy uncle stole. *Ham.* i. 5. 61.
(43) To lip a wanton in a *sécure* couch. *Oth.* iv. 1. 72.
(44) Which knows no pity, but is still sevére. *Ven.* 1000.
(45) And let go by the ac(tor). O just but *sévere* law. *Meas.* ii. 2. 41.
(46) His love sincére, his thoughts immaculate. *Gent.* ii. 7. 76.
(47) Sir, in good sooth, in *síncere* verity. *Lear*, ii. 2. 111.
(48) Neither supréme, how soon confusion. *Cor.* iii. 1. 110.
(49) The life of purity, the *súpreme* fair. *Lucr.* 780.
(50) But as we, under heaven, are *súpreme* head. *John* iii. 1. 155.

He also draws instances from the apocrypha of *bénign*, *córrupt*, *rémiss*; and brings under his rule the well-known instances of *exiled* and *humane*; (which we may here dismiss, for Milton uses *exíled* where it will take either accent, and distinguishes *human* and *humane* as we do;) he also quotes

(51) Have you done yet? Alack our *térrene* moon. *Ant.* iii. 13. 153.

to which I would add

(52) Open their *cóngealed* mouths and bleed afresh. *Rich.* 3rd, i. 2. 56.

(53) My *cóncealed* lady to our cancelled love. *Rom.* iii. 3. 98.

(54) Of murderous lech(ers): and in the *máture* time. *Lear*, iv. 6. 282.

and these prepositions

(55) That *thèreby* beauty's rose might never die. *Sonn.* i. 2.

(56) All ignorant that soul that sees thee *wíthout* wonder. *L. L. L.* iv. 2. 117.

This is one of the lines in which Nathaniel 'missed the accent': and *thereon* in the same play, iv. 3. 298, and

(57) Who, if it wink, shall *thèreon* fall and die. *Lucr.* 1139.

Schmidt concludes his essay with instancing the similarly shifting accent of disyllables compounded of *un*, as *unbacked*, *unbid*, *unblown*, *unborn*, *unbound*, *unchaste*, etc. (and I should class with these the compounds of *mis*-), which may be considered as parallel cases; but these disyllables are made up of a positive and a negative syllable, both of which carry some stress in ordinary speech, with either one or other insisted on according to the sense of the speaker; and they may thus easily take either accent in verse, and they differ in this from such words as *divine*, *secure*, *profound*, etc., which are, or have become, irresoluble units with one single well-marked stress. I therefore class these apart, and shall consider them separately.

This being the use of Shakespeare, we have to determine whether it gives the explanation of any of the verses in *Paradise Lost*. There can, I think, be no doubt that in Milton's early poems instances of recession do occur: of the prepositions there are these,

(58) The brood of Folly *wíthout* father bred. *Pens.* 2.

(59) Here be *wíthout* duck or nod. *Com.* 960.

and of the adjectives and participles these,

(60) About the *súpreme* Throne. *Time.* 17.

(61) In regions mild of calm and *sérene* air. *Com.* 4.

(62) And He, the *Súpreme* Good, to whom all things ill. 217.

(63) Not any boast of skill, but *extreme* shift. 272.

(64) She, that hath that, is clad in *cómplete* steel. 421.

(65) Wherewith she freezed her foes to *cóngealed* stone. 449.

(66) The *dívine* property of her first being. 469.

(67) The *súblime* notion, and high mystery. 785.

I should say that the above are all genuine cases; and yet most of these verses, if they occurred in *Paradise Lost*, (and a few similar ones do occur,) I should explain differently.

The matter stands thus: in all Milton's verse there is a frequent occurrence of the following rhythm, that is, a foot of two unstressed short syllables preceding a foot composed of two heavy syllables, as in these lines from Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*,

(68) The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn.

(69) Before milkwhite, now purple with love's wound.

(70) Love takes the meaning in love's conference.

It is common in Milton's early verse, which is much influenced by the verse of Shakespeare's first style; and he always made use of it. Whatever the account of it is, it is pleasant to the ear even in the smoothest verse, and is so, no doubt, by a kind of compensation in it. In typical cases there is no possibility of stress in the first short foot, and the first heavy syllable of the next foot seems to carry what has been omitted, with an accentuation bearing relation to the sense. Instances occur everywhere in Milton.

It will readily be seen that this is a condition of things which must very often do away with the necessity for supposing recession of accent; for if a passage occurs in which recession of accent might be supposed, it is merely in this usual condition of rhythm, and may be in order without it: and further, the more the verse frees itself, by assertion of stress, from the common smooth flow of alternate accents, and exhibits variety of rhythm, as Milton's late verse does,—the more will the ear allow this, or

any other recognised irregularity to intrude itself without support from the sense; and the less will it be prepared or disposed to correct such weak places by the conventional metric stress: or, to put the same thing in another way, there is a very strong reason why Milton should have excluded the licence of recession of accent from *Paradise Lost*; because the uncertainty which it introduces as to whether a syllable should be stressed or not, and the tendency which it has to make the verse smooth at all cost, would infect his inversions with uncertainty, and on these the character of his rhythm in a great measure depended. If we add to this consideration the rarity of possible instances in all *Paradise Lost, Regained, and Samson*,—putting the question of prepositions aside,—the evidence that Milton did actually intend to renounce this licence is very convincing. I have noted only these,

(71) Next Chemos, the óbscene dread of Moab's sons. i. 406.

(72) And sat as Princes; whom the Súpreme King. i. 735.

A doubtful example, for with the same sense we have the same rhythm as *supréme* would make, in *P. L.* i. 40, etc.

(73) Encamp their legions; or with óbscure wing. ii. 132.

(74) Our Súpreme Foe in time may much remit. ii. 210.

this may be a common inversion of first foot.

(75) In cónfused march forlorn, the adventurous bands. ii. 615.

this is better with the ordinary accent descriptive of confusion.

(76) Through the pure marble air his óblique way. iii. 564.

The words *complete, extreme, serene, sublime*, together occur in all twenty-four times in *Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained*, and *Samson*, and are always accented on the last. Each of these words occurs once in *Comus*, and there suffers recession of accent (see exx. above 61 et seq.): and it is worth observing that in *Par. Lost, divine Sémblance*, ix. 606, and *supréme Kingdom*, vi. 814, are divided between two lines.

The word *adverse* cannot be reckoned, for though Milton uses

both accents, the choice seems arbitrary (see ii. 77): and we still accent the word either way. It is like the adjectives compounded with *un*; and of these I have remarked only *unknown* as being in a double condition.

(77) Or *ún*known regions, what remains to him
But *ún*known dangers. ii. 443. 4.

*Uncouth* is always accented on the first: and for *prostrate*, which might seem from ex. 142, p. 20 to have a shifting accent, see the remarks there.

If the reader will now observe that all the six examples (seven if *únknown* be counted,) of recession or doubtful recession occur in the first three books of *Paradise Lost*, he will, I think, agree that Milton purposely excluded recession from *Paradise Lost*, as he did extrametrical syllables within the line, for fear of introducing uncertainty into his rhythms, but that the necessity of avoiding it altogether was not at first fully realised, or that his old habit was not quite conquered. The only fallacy here must lie in the premises, and it is possible enough that I may have overlooked some examples.

As Milton has twice in his earlier poems shifted the accent of *without*, it is necessary to examine the prepositions, and although the greater number of the following verses give far better rhythm to us without recession, and seem constructed to emphasize the sense, yet I think it not improbable (considering exx. 58, 59 above) that they may most of them have been read with recession in his time, whether he meant it or no. The following lists of examples, though not exhaustive, may I think be considered as very fully representative.

(78) That comes to all; but torture *without* end. *P. L.* i. 67.
(79) Must exercise us *without* hope of end. ii. 89.
(80) Illimitable ocean *without* bound. ii. 892.
(81) Loud as from numbers *without* number, sweet. iii. 346.
(82) In whose conspicuous countenance, *without* cloud. iii. 385.
(83) He views in breadth, and, *without* longer pause. iii. 561.
(84) Him first, Him last, Him midst, and *without* end. v. 165.

(85) One kingdom, joy and union *without* end. vii. 161.
(86) Variety *without* end: but of the tree. vii. 542.
(87) Smooth sliding *without* step, last led me up. viii. 302.
(88) Us happy, and *without* love no happiness. viii. 621.
(89) And forty days Elijah, *without* food. *P. R.* i. 353.
(90) From national obstriction, *without* taint. *Sam.* 312.

There are like instances of other such parts of speech, as in the following verses:

(91) Thus high uplifted *beyond* hope, aspires. ii. 7.
(92) Their seasons: *among* these the seat of men. vii. 623.
(93) And not molest us; *unless* we ourselves. viii. 186.
(94) Still glorious, *before* whom awake I stood. viii. 464.
(95) The stairs were such as *whéreon* Jacob saw. iii. 510.
(96) From the Asian kings, and Parthian *among* these. *P. R.* iv. 73.

The following verses in which recession is possible but evidently not intended may be compared:

(97) Alone, and *withoút* gúide, half-lost, I seek. ii. 975.
(98) Love without end, and *withóut* méasure grace. iii. 142.
(99) And be thyself Mán *among* mén on earth. iii. 283.
(100) Flowers of all hue, and *withoút* thórn the rose. iv. 256.
(101) Thy goodness *beyónd* thoúght, and power divine. v. 159.
(102) In mystic dance nót *without* sóng, resound. v. 178.
(103) Ordained withoút redemption, *withoút* end. v. 615.
(104) As a despíte dóne *against* the Móst Hígh. See p. 21.
(105) Successful *beyónd* hope, to lead ye forth. x. 463.

I do not expect every one to agree with me in the grouping of these examples, but if, as I think, recession must have been meant to be excluded from some, it could scarcely have been excluded if it had been admitted in the other places. The only lines which seem to me probable cases are the *unless* and *whereon* exx., 93 and 95.

But even if Milton, as I suppose, banished recession of accent from his later prosody, it did not disappear from English poetry. There are strangely many examples of it in Shelley, whose verse,

since it is lacking in that quality which critics call roughness in Milton, readily betrays irregularities which it is not constructed to carry. In *The Witch of Atlas* is this line,

(106) A haven, béneath whose translucent floor. xlix.

Beneath was here, I suppose, sounded *bénneath*, as in ex. 118 on p. 18 before would be *béffor*, if that line be admitted as an instance of recession.

The word *serene*, which Shelley usually stressed as we do, removes its accent away to the first syllable, when followed by a contiguous stress.

(107) Or sérene morning air; and far beyond. *Epips.* 438.

(108) Through which his soul, like Vesper's sérene beam. *Athan.* i. 61.

(109) And profoundest midnight shroud the sérene lights of heaven.

There is an example of recession in the first stanza of *The Skylark*,

(110) In prófuse strains of unpremeditated art.

the word *divine* is in the same condition,

(111) And lofty hopes of dívine liberty. *Alastor*, 159.

(112) Bore to thy honour through the dívine gloom. *Prom.* iii. 3.

(113) The herd went wandering o'er the dívine mead. *Hymn-Merc.* lxxxvi.

And thus *intense*, *distinct*, *supreme*, *extreme*.

(114) By sightless lightning?—th' íntense atom glows. *Ad.* xx.

(115) The dístinct valley and the vacant woods. *Alast.* 195.

(116) More dístinct than the thunder's wildest roar. *Spect. H.* 46.

(117) God is one súpreme goodness, one pure essence. *Cald.* i. 115, etc.

(118) Thy éxtreme hope, the loveliest and the last. *Ad.* vi.

(119) His éxtreme way to her dim dwellingplace. *Ad.* viii.

(120) Scarce visible from éxtreme loveliness. *Epips.* 104, etc.

Thus also *antique*, and *obscene*.

The new Concordance to Shelley's poems, by Mr. F. S. Ellis,

published this year by Mr. Quaritch, will give ample evidence of Shelley's practice: I observe in it that the line

(121) Its stony jaws; the abrupt mountain breaks. *Alast.* 551.

is given with *abrupt* accented on the first syllable. The line with the usual accentuation has a fine Miltonic rhythm, in correspondence with the sense; and it is an interesting confirmation of what I said above of the character of Shelley's rhythms, that the compiler of the dictionary, whose acquaintance with Shelley's verse must be of a most exceptional kind, should have considered that rhythm impossible.

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NOTE.—The above remarks on recession were written before I had seen Dr. Schmidt's excursus: to which a friend called my attention. I have rearranged my notes to give prominence to his work, which I have inserted, to the reader's advantage, in place of my own examination of Shakespeare's practice.

## APPENDIX E.

### PRONUNCIATION IN MILTON.

I avoided the question of pronunciation in my tract, because I am not qualified to give any opinion on the subject, and for whatever I know I have to thank those who know more. The matter too is complicated by the peculiar spelling which Milton used in *Paradise Lost*; and since that is unfortunately not preserved in later editions, I could not conveniently use it. With regard to this spelling, I was myself familiar only with the common texts, and wrote from my knowledge of them: but when I undertook my task I read through the poem in a facsimile of the first edition, and came to the following conclusions.

First, that—excluding words, the spelling of which is fanciful or antique, such as *highth* for *height*, and *thir* for *their*—the

main object of the unusual spelling is to ensure the verse being read rightly. Where a word is shortened, if there is choice or doubt as to which syllable should suffer, one is generally indicated in the spelling; and this is as true of whole verses as of words. In the appendix on elision examples will be found of words, and on pages 16 and 39 of lines, which illustrate this. Also the elision of the definite article is intended to be always shown.

Next that, as might be expected, Milton's blindness did not allow such work as this to be carried out thoroughly; so that the spelling is not consistent, nor free from mistakes, which might be corrected with certainty and advantage.

Also that Milton did not aim at consistency. It seems as if, in cases where he rejected the ordinary spelling as misleading, he did not care to fix another, for he has represented the same word in different ways. And in this, as in other respects, he was a true Elizabethan.

Lastly, that the spelling shows that Milton took a phonetic view of prosody; and that, though his system may be considered as a literary modification of Chaucer's, yet the modification was made on phonetic principles, with definite purpose in choice and exclusion.

Though I have not examined the book so well as to be in a position to deny that a study of Milton's spelling in the first edition might eliminate the errors, and non-essential variations, and leave a residue which would exhibit a system not at first apparent, yet I did not myself discern it, and I found nothing to change the conclusions at which I had already arrived, except in the particular last mentioned, namely that the 'liquid elisions' were adopted by Milton to the exclusion of others, not only because they pleased his ear, but because he knew why they did so. See the Appendix on Elision.

A phonetic examination of English verse, much as it is to be desired, I never undertook: and as Milton's method is after all only a modification of tradition, I thought that the aim which I had in view was to be gained without discussion of this kind.

Setting therefore the spelling aside, the question remained whether the pronunciation in Milton's time differed so from our own as to need attention in an examination of his verse; and I was decidedly of opinion that it did not: and as I was loth to hamper the metrical facts which I wished to notice with anything so unfamiliar and uncertain as restorations of old pronunciation are apt to be, I chose to disregard the whole subject except parenthetically.

But I was led in my first edition to adopt the suggestion that the monosyllabic prepositions, *to*, *from*, *with*, etc., might have had more stress value in Milton's time than they have now. I do not myself see any sign of this in Milton's verse, and I should not have inserted the opinion if the following disproof of it had occurred to me. Shakespeare, whose early verse may be described as syllabic, gradually came to write a verse dependent on stress, which we may assume was the speech-accent of his time; and from his later work we can tell exactly the relative stress-values of the syllables in the sentences. Now the prepositions in question are among the first words to lose full syllabic value in this competition: see the following passage from *Antony and Cleopatra*,

> We must retúrn *to the* court of guard: the night
> Is shiny; and, they say, we shall embattle
> *By the* sécond hoúr, *in the* morn.

It is, I think, certain from such verse as this that these prepositions had even less syllabic value in the speech of Shakespeare's time than they have now; and I suppose it follows that they had not more in Milton's time.

In another place I rejected the notion that the shortening of words like *general* in Milton was due to a clumsy trilling of the *r*, and a pronunciation like *generl*. It has seemed to me as if it was the fashion of the present day rather to exaggerate the difference between the older pronunciation and our own. With regard to *r* it is, I believe, universally assumed that it was without exception trilled throughout England in Chaucer's time. But in Freeman's *Norman Conquest*, vol. ii, p. 511 of the third

edition under his account of Westminster Abbey, which was at first called Thorney Abbey, is the following note,

'Wace (1065̄3) enlarges on the name, and his phonetic spelling illustrates his natural difficulty in pronouncing the letter þ.

En un islet esteit assise,
*Zonée* out nom, joste Tamise;
*Zonée* por ço l' apelon,
Ke d' espine i out foison,
E ke l' ewe en alout environ.
*Ee* en engleiz isle apelon,
*Ee* est isle, *zon* est espine,
Seit rainz, seit arbre, seit racine;
*Zonée*, ço est en engleiz
Isle d' espine en franceiz.'

from which it seems to me to follow that *thorn* was pronounced in London in the twelfth century as it is now: for if the *r* had been trilled it would surely have appeared in the Norman-French as *zorn*. There may perhaps be some other explanation of this.

It is true that a number of words are to be found in Milton's poems which he stresses differently from us; and these are generally marked with their peculiar accent in the common editions. The following list of them is taken from Nares' *Orthoepy*; I do not know how complete it is, and I have omitted a few words, which I thought doubtful or not requiring notice.

Aspéct. Áttribúted (also attríbuted). Blasphémous. Brígad. Captíve (verb). Colleágue. Commércing. Comráde. Consúlt (subst.). Contést (subst.). Cóntribute. Convérse (subst.). Convóy. Crystállin. Egréss. Exíle. Fárewell (subst.). Impúlse. Instínct (subst.). Mánkind. Midníght. Odórous. Perfúme (subst.). Precíncts. Prescrípt. Procéss. Procínct. Prodúct. Réceptacle. Reflúx. Remédiless. Sepúlchred. Sojoúrn. Sunbeám. Sunshíne. Survéy (subst.). Travérse (verb). Triúmph (verb, also tríumph). Úncouth. Upróar. Volúbil.

Of the above words, which it will be seen are mostly Latin, about ten are either with this accentuation peculiar to Milton,

or of very rare occurrence in poetry. The remaining thirty are about equally divided between words which were thus accentuated in his time, and words the accent of which had already shifted, or was then shifting, and for which he preferred the older or more correct pronunciation. Some of them he himself accents differently in different places: they seldom give rise to any doubt; and when they do, a knowledge of his rhythms is necessary to solve the difficulty.

For if the old poets are to be our authority for the accent and pronunciation of their time, we must first understand their rhythmical intention, nor can trustworthy conclusions be drawn from their verse until the verse be understood; and Milton wrote much more carefully than he has been criticised. The learned Tyrwhitt, for example—to whom I gladly record a heavy debt of enjoyment for his edition of Chaucer,—when commenting on the following verse from the *Prologue* to the *Canterbury Tales*,

Of Engelond to Can|ter bú|ry they wénde,

which he thus divides, and arguing against the supposition that Chaucer can have written 'without any restraint' of metrical rule with respect to 'superfluous syllables,' justly parallels Chaucer's trisyllabic feet with examples from Milton; and, among some lines from *Paradise Lost*, which he explains more or less correctly, he gives our ex. 44, page 39,

Things not revealed which the invi|sible King,

which he thus divides, not only violating both the scansion and rhythm, but neglecting the correct elision as printed by Milton, in order to establish an inferior rhythm, which makes the line like his interpretation of the line quoted from Chaucer.

That same line of Chaucer may serve me to justify my complaint of what I called the exaggeration of the differences of the old pronunciation. It is one of three lines in the first thirty of the *Prologue* which contain the word Canterbury, and Canterbury is used to fill either three or four places in the verse: thus—

Of Engelond to Cantèrbury they wende.
That toward Canterbury wolden ryde.

from which I should conclude that *Canterbury* was pronounced in Chaucer's time as it is now; for we say either *Canterbury* or *Canterb'ry*. But on p. 264 of vol. 1 of the Aldine edition, I am instructed to pronounce the lines thus—

> Of Engelond to Kan'terber'ee dhahy wendë.
> Dhat tohwerd Kan'terber'ee wolden reedë.

And thus written the first of these verses will not scan. *dhahy* does not look inexpugnable, but confining criticism to *Canterberee* this *ee* seems to be at least an exaggeration. It must be the vowel sound of *feel*, Ellis' ii, (the longest of all the i, y, sounds; being twice the i in the French *fini*,) and it is presumably put here for his *ii*, (which is the prolonged or double form of the short *i* in the English *finny*,) for the reason that this latter sound is more difficult of pronunciation, and the instructions are intended for ordinary readers. But even this *ii* would be an extreme allowance of length. It happens that *bury* is one of the words in the table which Ellis gives to illustrate the changes of pronunciation since the fourteenth century, and he writes it ber'*i*, unchanged from Chaucer's time to our own. So that it seems that (ee=ii) the heaviest of all the four i, y, sounds, is put instead of (*i*) the lightest, to show us how to pronounce y, which we should have pronounced correctly if left to ourselves; whereas the antiquary's explanation destroys the verse.

But my only purpose in writing these notes on Milton was to draw attention to his workmanship, and to combat the common opinion that there is no such thing as English prosody. It is not too much to say that most of our classical scholars have regarded the ten-syllable verses of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton, as so many better or worse attempts to compose regular, alternately stressed, so-called iambic lines; broken here and there by the negligent admission of 'superfluous' syllables. The language of Tyrwhitt in the following note is typical: he is speaking of rhymed verse:

'It is agreed, I believe, that in our heroick metre those verses (considered singly) are the most harmonious in which the accents

fall upon the even syllables; but it has never (that I know) been defined how far a verse may vary from this its most perfect form, and yet remain a verse. On the *tenth* (or rhyming) syllable a strong accent is in all cases indispensably required, and in order to make the line tolerably harmonious, it seems necessary that at least *two more* of the *even* syllables should be accented, the *fourth* being (almost always) one of them. Milton, however, has not subjected his verse EVEN TO THESE RULES; particularly (either by NEGLIGENCE or design) he has frequently put an unaccented syllable in the *fourth* place.'

## APPENDIX F.

### ON METRICAL EQUIVALENCE.

I used the term 'metrical equivalence' as I found it. It only means that two short syllables are equivalent to one long syllable. In Greek and Latin they are so considered; and as most of our poets have been familiar with the poetry of those languages, it is likely that they may sometimes have imagined that the rule was natural to verse in all languages, and they may have been also unconsciously affected by it for better or worse; and this, although the declared attempts to write English verse on the classical system have failed.

My friend, the late Father Gerard Hopkins, to whom I sent the MS. of my tract for criticism, blamed my omission of any statement of what he considered the truth on this point. He wrote thus to me:—

'I cannot but hope that in your metrical paper you will somewhere distinctly state the principle of equivalence, and that it was quite unrecognised in Milton's, and still more in Shakespeare's time. All, but especially young students, need to be made clearly to understand what metrical equivalence is, that it is in use in English now, and that it was not then,—and that it was Milton's artifices, as you explain them, that helped to introduce it.'

In quoting this I consider that I have done my duty by the theory. I suppose that the statement represents fairly what some metrists hold, for it is the opinion of one who was learned and acute on all such questions. I go with it so far that I am ready to grant that in English two short syllables may sometimes be equivalent to one long one; but it seems to me wrong to imagine that English rhythms can ever be explained or governed by such a fiction as this is, when it is made a general law: because we recognise different gradations of length both in our long and short syllables; because also all the rhythms which it is called in to explain are governed by stress, and stressing a short syllable can never make it equal in length to two unstressed syllables, which is really what is intended to be said. Or if this meaning be denied, and equivalence defined as between unstressed syllables only, it is enough to remark, that in blank verse the place occupied by two short syllables may, as often as not, be filled as well by one short as by one long syllable; so that a short syllable must be equivalent to a long one. The fact is that our classical verse is a hybrid, and cannot be explained exclusively by English or by classical rule; nor is much light thrown on it by straining the analogy of Greek and Latin quantitative feet. In Milton's verse the chief metrical rule is the number of syllables; and though verse written on his or Shakespeare's early model is the most ready of any to accept the equivalence theory, yet it is plain that even here the stress is of at least equal importance, and asserts itself to decide every question, as soon as the syllabic limit is trifled with. In this respect the practice of Shakespeare is full of teaching; for as he threw off the syllabic trammels of his early style, he came to determine his rhythm by stress: and Milton did just the same in *Samson Agonistes*, though he learnedly disguised his liberty by various artifices. Immediately English verse is written free from a numeration of syllables, it falls back on the number of stresses as its determining law: that is its governing power, and constitutes its form; and this is a perfectly different system from that which counts the syllables. It seems also the most natural

to our language; and I think that the confusion which exists with regard to it is due to the fact that stress cannot be excluded from consideration even in verse that depends primarily on the number of syllables. The two systems are mixed in our tradition, and they must be separated before a prosody of stress can arise. But if once the notion be got rid of that you must have so many syllables in a line to make a verse, or must account for the supernumerary ones in some such manner as the Greeks or Latins would have done, then the stress will declare its supremacy; which, as may be seen in Shakespeare and Milton, it is burning to do.

Now the primary law of pure stressed verse is, that there shall never be a conventional or imaginary stress: that is, *the verse cannot make the stress, because it is the stress that makes the verse.* It is the neglect of this which is the fault of Coleridge's *Christabel*, considered as stressed verse. The reader will not think that I am finding fault with that poem, when I am only quarrelling with its preface, in which Coleridge implied that it was written in purely stressed verse, whereas it is not. He says that the metre of it is 'founded on *a new principle*, namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.' Now here was, as far as it went, a definite statement of the laws of a stress prosody; but if we examine the verse we find that we cannot count by stresses any more than we can in Milton's blank verse, for *Christabel* admits conventional stresses, just as any English verse had done before Coleridge's time, and does to this day.

> Tis the míddle of níght by the cástle clóck
> And the ówls have awáken'd the crówing cóck,
> Tu—whít!—Tu—whóo!
> And hárk agáin! the crówing cóck
> How drówsilỳ it créw.

It was a slip in the wording of Coleridge's definition when he said that the third and fifth lines had four accents[1], but he did mean the fifth to have three, and the second accent or stress of the three is a conventional stress: it does not exist in the language, but in the metre, and has to be imagined because the metre requires it: and it is plain that if the stress is to be the rule of the verse, the verse must not thus be relied on to create the stress.

To save the reader the trouble of turning to the poem to satisfy himself on this point, I will quote some more lines which offend against this law of stressed verse.

Fròm her kénnel beneáth the róck,
She máketh ánswer tò the clóck.
A fúrlong fròm the cástle gáte.
Òf her ówn betróthed knight.

This poem with its preface has no doubt done much to hinder the right understanding of stressed verse: for Coleridge would not be lightly suspected of thus mistaking his own method:—but it is plain that he did not ever shake off the tradition of these conventional, metric stresses, nor really imagine a stressed verse which should be entirely free from them. The reader will understand that I am not saying that the lines in question are bad or good: they are necessary in the poem for this reason, that the stress not being really creative of the rhythm, but only accenting the regular beats of a loose metre,—an unbroken succession of strong stresses would make monotony or singsong; which is generally avoided throughout *Christabel* by the common methods, the stresses being frequently disregarded, and sometimes overloaded: Whereas in pure stressed verse the monotony would be avoided by inverting some of the stresses or leaving them bare, in such a manner as we are led to expect early in the poem by the lines—

Ís the níght chílly and dárk?
The níght is chílly, but nót dárk.

[1] 'Only four accents' must therefore be interpreted 'not more than four'; but this negation, though convenient for lines with 'weak places,' is useless as a description: it may mean three and a half.

With regard to stress *Christabel* is, with such rare exceptions, in the same condition as *L'Allegro*; while the syllabic liberty, so far from being new, is found in English verse from the earliest times.

Next to this mistake of admitting conventional stresses, I would mention another practice of writers who have attempted the freer verse based on stress, which is this; they set up a rhythm in the first lines, and expect that this will assert itself throughout the poem, in spite of false quantities and conventional stresses. This, though it has not hindered the poems so written from being much praised for their rhythmical flow, implies the same fault as Coleridge's, but it shows also a greater misapprehension of the qualities of stressed verse; one chief advantage of which is that no rhythm need be exactly repeated. The constant repetition of the same stressed rhythm in every line must produce a 'sing-song,' and it is a clumsy remedy to break the singsong at the cost of the prosody: whereas stressed verse, if freely written, would be as far removed from singsong as is *Paradise Lost*. If the number of stresses in each line be fixed, [and such a fixation would be the metre,] and if the stresses be determined only by the language and its sense, and if the syllables which they have to carry do not overburden them, then every line may have a different rhythm; though so much variety is not of necessity.

Now this is very much what Milton was aiming at in the lyrical parts of *Samson*, but he still sought to accomplish it by fictitious units and feet after the classical models, as I have attempted to show. There is really no reason at all for the existence of these: only one step was needed, which was to cast them away. He wrote in the choruses of *Samson* a rhythmical stressed verse, and scanned it by means of fictions. *He need not have troubled himself about the scansion at all. If the stressed rhythm is the beauty of the verse, it is a sufficient account of it.* But this seems too simple to be understood.

The metrical questions which arise are, What will a stress carry? and what are the usual units of the verse? This is

beyond my subject: but when the laws of English stressed verse are recognised, it will, I think, be found that they explain all those irregularities of well-written free verse, to which metrists are now at pains to match the names of Greek quantitative feet, though these have no natural relation to them. They make use of them, I presume, as a makeshift for a true terminology. Supposing ∧ to represent a stressed syllable, we want names for the following units, −∧∪, ∪∧−∪∧∪, ∧∪∪, ∪∪∧, ∧−, −∧, ∧∪, ∪∧, ∧: and these units will be of two orders, according as the stress is strong or weak; or may be further distinguished as perfect and imperfect, according as the carried syllables are heavy or light longs, and light or heavy shorts. I will only add that when English poets will write verse governed honestly by natural speech-stress, they will discover the laws for themselves, and will find open to them an infinite field of rhythm as yet untouched. There is nothing which may not be done in it, and it is perhaps not the least of its advantages that it is most difficult to do well.

## APPENDIX G.

### On the use of Greek Terminology in English Prosody.

Most readers will observe that I have avoided using the term Iambic of blank verse. I believe that it was applied to English verse from a misconception, and I am sure that it leads to nothing but confusion. Before any one calls the feet in English blank verse iambs let him consider in what respect they are entitled to the name. A Greek or Latin iambus is a foot of two syllables, the first of which is always short, and the second always, at least by position, long, while the accent is as often on the first as on the second. The so-called English iambus, whatever its commonest condition may be, may have either of its syllables short, or long, or both may be short, or both long, while

the stress is always on the last. There is nothing in common between the classical and the English feet except what is common to all disyllabic feet: the English iambs might for this be as well called trochees or spondees; and if the consideration be added that in the Greek and Latin iambus the first syllable is reckoned to be exactly half the value of the second—just as a crotchet is half a minim—it is plain that it must be better to renounce altogether the attempt to readjust a term, which means something so remotely and definitely different from that to which we would apply it.

I am convinced also that it is the misuse of this and like terms which leads many to think that stress in English corresponds with quantity in Greek and Latin. But syllables are in English as much distinguished by length and brevity as they can have been in Greek or Latin; while, on the other hand, Latin verse (if not Greek) was as much distinguished by its stress as English verse is, although that stress must have been less marked, and not of such an overruling character. If this assertion is new or strange to the reader, let him question his ear as to what the chief differentiation of the lines of the Æneid is. Take for example the first two lines: they both commence with a dactyl; how do these dactyls differ?

Árma vi|rúmque cá|no
Itáli|am fá|to prófu|gus.

Or let him think what it was that Ovid sought after when he ruled that his pentameters should close with a disyllable; or what Horace gained for his Sapphic line by varying the caesura.

Stress is easily perceived in Latin poetry; indeed the distinction between different Latin poets' treatment of the same metres and our appreciation of their versification depend on it. But the verse is not usually approached from this side. A boy is taught at school the sequence of long and short syllables, and an attention to the position of caesuras and other breaks which scholars have discovered, and by observing these he counterfeits the rhythms. *But it was the rhythms that caused the caesuras.*

If a boy were told, for example, that it saved the monotony of a pentameter to stress the penultimate, he would understand what he was doing, and would use a disyllable in the last place with right intention; not as he does now, because he knows that any other word will be scratched out by his tutor. It is possible that the darkness in which scholars find themselves with respect to Greek rhythms has affected their manner of regarding the Latin: for when they come to teach a boy to write Greek iambics they could hardly act otherwise than they do, since there is no one who could point out with confidence the Greek rhythms for imitation. No doubt those scholars who write careful Greek verse do please their ear, as it has been trained by long study of the models; but it is an English ear that they please, trained by reading the models in the same wrong way as that in which they read their own imitations. No one could tell, *a priori*, how the result would be likely to sound in a Greek ear. The excellence of such performances seems one of the most artificial things in the world, though it may be none the worse for that.

As for quantity in English verse, whoever confounds it with stress will be sure to violate it. Some critics even assert that it does not exist. I suppose that they are led to think so by the numerous false quantities which disfigure English so-called anapaestic and hexameter verse, or because our language does not countenance the fiction concerning quantity, which is drummed into all of us in our tender years; that is, that two short syllables are always exactly equal to one long—which, however, no doubt they sometimes are, even in English, if we could only tell how to measure them. We have the more reasonable plan of allowing ourselves to consider every syllable on its own merits, in its special place, and thus of admitting all degrees of length and brevity as they really exist; a distinction which must have equally existed in Greek and Latin speech, but which their system of prosody overrode, for its theory admitted only units and half units, and nothing between; and so for some syllables of intermediate value they were driven to

rule that these might count either for one or half, pass either for long or short, because it was clear that they were neither one nor the other; a fiction quite foreign to our more natural method. Our language contains syllables as short as it is possible for the tongue to frame, and others as long, I suppose, as spoken syllables ever were; and it is strange that the recognition of these should be hindered by the existence and recognition of syllables of intermediate lengths.

## APPENDIX H.

### SPECIMENS OF TEN-SYLLABLE VERSE, ETC.

#### I.

To fill up the spare pages of this sheet, I will give some specimens of early ten-syllable verse: and first, in illustration of Miltonic elision, that the reader may for himself compare Chaucer's use with Milton's, I give, from the beginning of the *Prologue to the Canterbury Tales*, the lines in which supernumerary syllables occur within the verse. Neglecting many elisions of the weak terminal vowels now lost to the language, which do not here concern us, I have marked the supernumerary syllables, as in the examples from Milton, by italic type or apostrophes. I take the text from the Rev. Dr. Morris' edition in the Clarendon Press series, except that I have written *ever* for *evere*, and *deliver* for *delivere*.

Of which vertú engend'red is the flour. 4.
Of Engelond, to Caunterbu*ry* they wende. 16 and 22.
So hadde I spoken with hem ev*e*richon. 31.
And ev*er* honoúrèd for his worthinesse. 50.
At Alisaundr*e* he was, whan it was wonne. 51.
Of Algezir, and rid*en* in Belmarye. 57.
And evermore he hadde a sov*e*reyn prys. 67.
A lovyer and a lusty bacheler. 80.
And wonderly deliv*er* and greet of strengthe. 84.

He was as fresh as is the mon*e*th of May. 92 (month).
A Cristof*re* on his brest of silver shene. 115.
That of hir smyling was ful simp*le* and coy. 119.
Wel coud she car*ie* a morsel, and wel keepe. 130 (coude).
And ful plesaùnt, and amiab*le* of port. 138.
She was so charitab*le*, and so pitoùs. 143.

Pĭtoūs was accentuated pĭtous; but Chaucer's prosody, like the French, allows such words at the end of the line: where their accent being shifted *metri gratiâ*, they cannot have had the full stress of monosyllabic endings like the preceding examples quoted; and thus we see another way in which inversions of the fifth foot come naturally to those familiar with our national poetry: see p. 20.

Is lik'nèd til a fish *that is* waterlees. 180. = that's.
What sholde he stud*ie*, and make himselven wood. 184.
Upon a book in cloist*re* alwey to poure. 185.
Grehoundës he hadde, as swifte as fow*el* in flight. 190.
And, for to fest*ne* his hood under his chin. 195.
He hadde of gold y-wroght a curious pin. 196.
His heed was ball*ed*, that shoon as any glas. 198. = ball'd.
His botës soup*le*, his hors in greet estat. 203.
A fat swan lov*ed* he best of any roost. 206.
Unto his ord*re* he was a noble post. 214 and 220.
Ful wel bilov*ed*, and famul*ier* was he. 215.
With frankëleyns ov*er*al in his contree. 216 and 249.
So estatly was he of his governance. 281.

I give these lines without any opinion on the authority of this text, which gets rid of many other examples.

## II.

On page 51 it is said that Ellis represents Chaucer's *able* sometimes as *aab'l*, and sometimes as *aabl'*. *aa* means merely the long *ah* sound, and this syllable was without doubt commonly stressed; but about the *bl*, did Chaucer say *miserâb'l* or *miserâbl'*, *possîb'l* or *possîbl'*? It seems most probable, as Ellis'

alternative spelling would imply, that Chaucer said either, and in the same words, as we may hear now in modern French; but I think myself that even the spelling *b'l* shortens the longer pronunciation more than is always quite justifiable. I will give some lines from Chaucer which will show that although the syllable was 'elided' before a vowel,—as in lines 138, 143, above from the prologue,—it was yet strong enough to fill a place in the line, even before an open vowel; and in the vagarious spelling of the MSS., which are contemporary enough to be in evidence, it appears as *bel* and *bil*, just as is required by its rhymes in modern verse. I reproduce Dr. Morris' text from the 'Aldine' edition.

Abhominable to the God of hevene. Somp. 300.
Ne see ye not this honurable knight. March. 1010.
With invisible wounde ay incurable. Monk. 610.
Lord Phebus, cast thin merciable eyghe. Frank. 308.
As it possibil is a frend to be. Shipman. 32.

Whether there is at this early date any sign of the weight of this Latin termination giving way to the more natural speech-stress of the word with which it is compounded I have not knowledge to say: such evidence would, I suppose, first appear in words where the two accents collided, as in *dampnable*, and in the verse of more purely English writers, who probably use such words more sparingly; but in the Pearl there is the following line,

What resonabele hyre be naught be runne,

which, if the text be right, shows a shortening of the *a*, for the line has only four stresses; the spelling *bele* is nothing. See also órrĭblў, *Monks Tale*, 627.

The following lines may interest the reader for different reasons:

The aungel of God, and every maner boone. 2nd Nun. 356.
The slaughter of cristen folk, and deshonoúr. M. of Law. 858.
And bénigne harte, shall serve hym till I dye. Cs of Love. 214.
To rémewe all the rokkes of Brytaigne. Frank. 485.
And many a labour, and many a grete emprise. Frank. 4.

O noble almighty Sampson, leef and deere. Monk. 62.
O noble Sampson, strengest of al mankynde. Monk. 85.
And doun fel temple and al, and ther it lay. 95.
Well oughte men thy pitous deth complayne. Monk. 387.
With a ful pitous face, pale of hewe. N. Priest's. 203.
That thilke day was perilous to the. 413.

III.

The following is a specimen of Marlowe's blank verse, from the last act of the first part of Tamburlaine. The text is from Mr. Bullen's edition, but as I am not concerned with the sense, I have not adopted emendations:—

Ah, fair Zenocrate!—divine Zenocrate!—
Fair is too foul an epithet for thee,
That in thy passion for thy country's love,
And fear to see thy kingly father's harm,
With hair dishevelled wip'st thy watery cheeks;
And, like to Flora in her morning pride,
Shaking her silver tresses in the air,
Rain'st on the earth resolvèd pearl in showers,
And sprinklest sapphires on thy shining face,
Where beauty, Mother to the Muses, sits
Taking instructions from thy flowing eyes,
† Eyes, when that Ebena steps to heaven,
In silence of thy solemn evening's walk,
Make, in the mantle of the richest night,
The moon, the planets, and the meteors, light;
There angels, in their crystal armours fight
A doubtful battle with my tempted thoughts
For Egypt's freedom, and the Soldan's life;
His life that so consumes Zenocrate,
Whose sorrows lay more siege unto my soul,
Than all my army to Damascus walls:
And neither Persia's sovereign, nor the Turk
Troubled my senses with conceit of foil
So much by much as doth Zenocrate.
| What is beauty, saith my sufferings, then? 25
If all the pens that ever poets held
Had fed the feeling of their masters' thoughts,

And every sweetness that inspired their hearts,
Their minds, and muses on admirèd themes;
If all the heavenly quintessence they still
From their immortal flowers of poesy,
Wherein, as in a mirror, we perceive
The highest reaches of a human wit;
If these had made one poem's period,
And all combined in beauty's worthiness,
Yet should there hover in their restless heads
One thought, one grace, one wonder, at the least,
Which into words no virtue can digest.
But how unseemly is it for my sex,
My discipline of arms and chivalry,
My nature and the terror of my name,
To harbour thoughts effeminate and faint!
Save only that in beauty's just applause,
With whose instinct the soul of man is touched:
And every warrior that is rapt with love
Of fame of valour, and of victory,
Must needs have beauty beat on his conceits:
I thus conceiving and subduing both
That which hath stopt the tempest of the gods,
Even from the fiery-spangled veil of Heaven,
To feel the lowly warmth of shepherds' flames,
And martch in cottages of strowed weeds,
Shall give the world to note for all my birth
That virtue solely is the sum of glory,
And fashions men with true nobility.

This passage, which well exhibits the famed magnificence of Marlowe's verse, has, compared with Milton, the following characteristics: Absence of elisions. Absence of inversions: thus the nine-syllable verse (line 25) has great force. Absence of breaks: the unity of the line being often further strengthened by alliteration. Frequency of weak third foot: this being actually the commonest type of line. Also the use of rhyme as an ornament. Rhyme occurs in *Paradise Lost* (see I. 146. 8. 51; II. 220. 1; IV. 24–27), but only as a natural richness among the varieties of speech; and it would seem that it cannot be forbidden in a long poem but by the scrupulosity which betrays art.

This verse is soon monotonous, and, as Mr. Bullen has lately pointed out, Peele wrote it before Marlowe. From his *Arraignment of Paris*, 1584, I quote this example (Act iv).

> Sacred and just, thou great and dreadful Jove,
> And you thrice-reverend powers, whom love nor hate
> May wrest awry; if this, to me a man,
> This fortune fatal be, that I must plead
> For safe excusal of my guiltless thought,
> The honour more makes my mishap the less,
> That I a man must plead before the gods,
> Gracious forbearers of the world's amiss,
> For her, whose beauty how it hath enticed,
> This heavenly senate may with me aver. . . .
> I might offend, sith I was guerdonèd,
> And tempted more than ever creature was
> With wealth, with beauty, and with chivalry,
> And so preferr'd beauty before them all,
> The thing that hath enchanted heaven itself.
> And for the one, contentment is my wealth;
> A shell of salt will serve a shepherd swain,
> A slender banquet in a homely scrip,
> And water running from the silver spring.
> For arms, they dread no foes that sit so low;
> A thorn can keep the wind from off my back,
> A sheepcote thatch'd a shepherd's palace hight.
> Of tragic Muses shepherds con no skill;
> Enough is them, if Cupid ben displeased,
> To sing his praise on slender oaten pipe.
> And thus, thrice-reverend, have I told my tale,
> And crave the torment of my guiltless soul
> To be measúrèd by my faultless thought.
> If warlike Pallas, or the Queen of Heaven
> Sue to reverse my sentence by appeal,
> Be it as please your majesties divine;
> The wrong, the hurt, not mine, if any be,
> But hers whose beauty claimed the prize of me.

These passages of blank verse before Shakespeare show it in transition from the rhymed couplet.

Oxford

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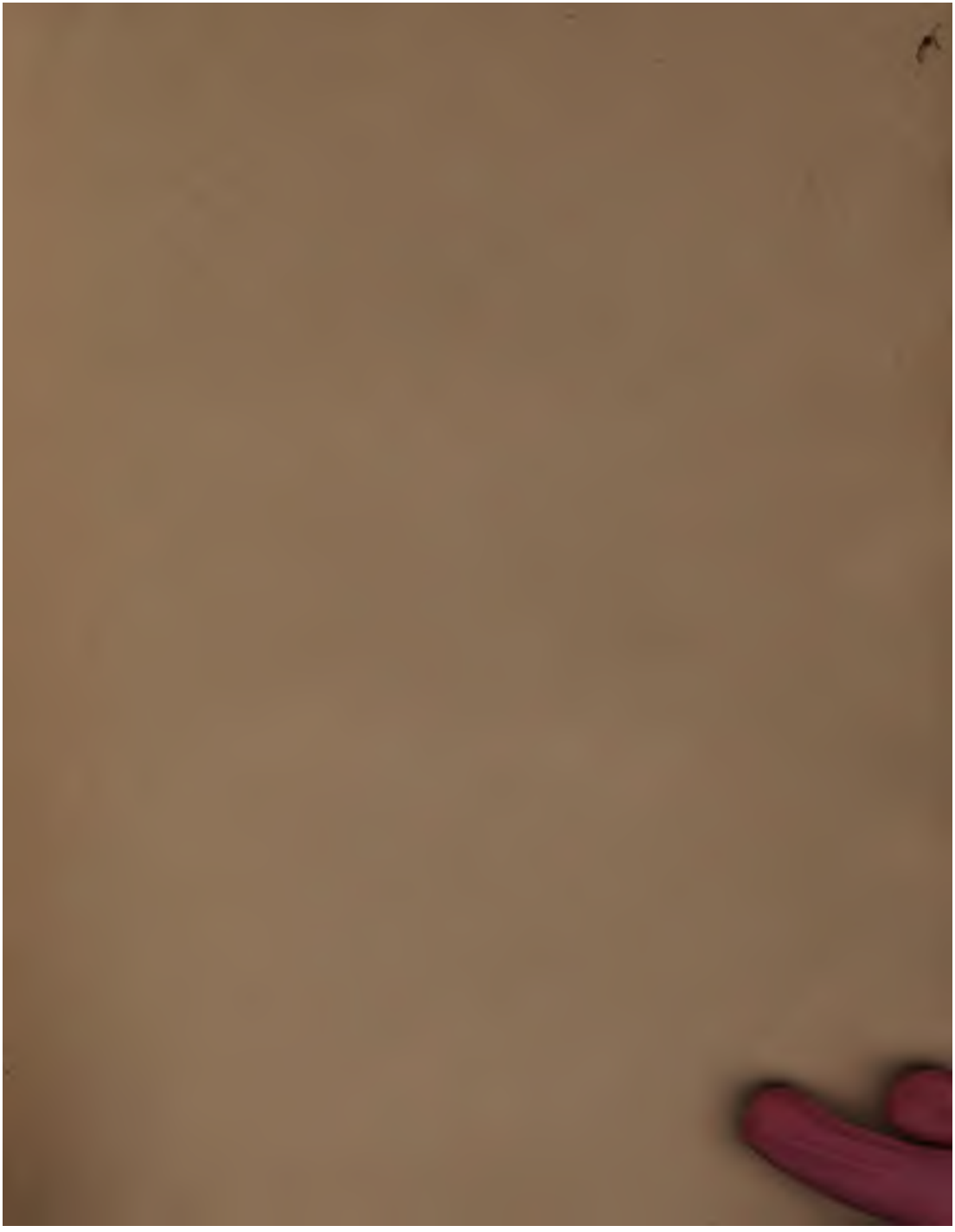

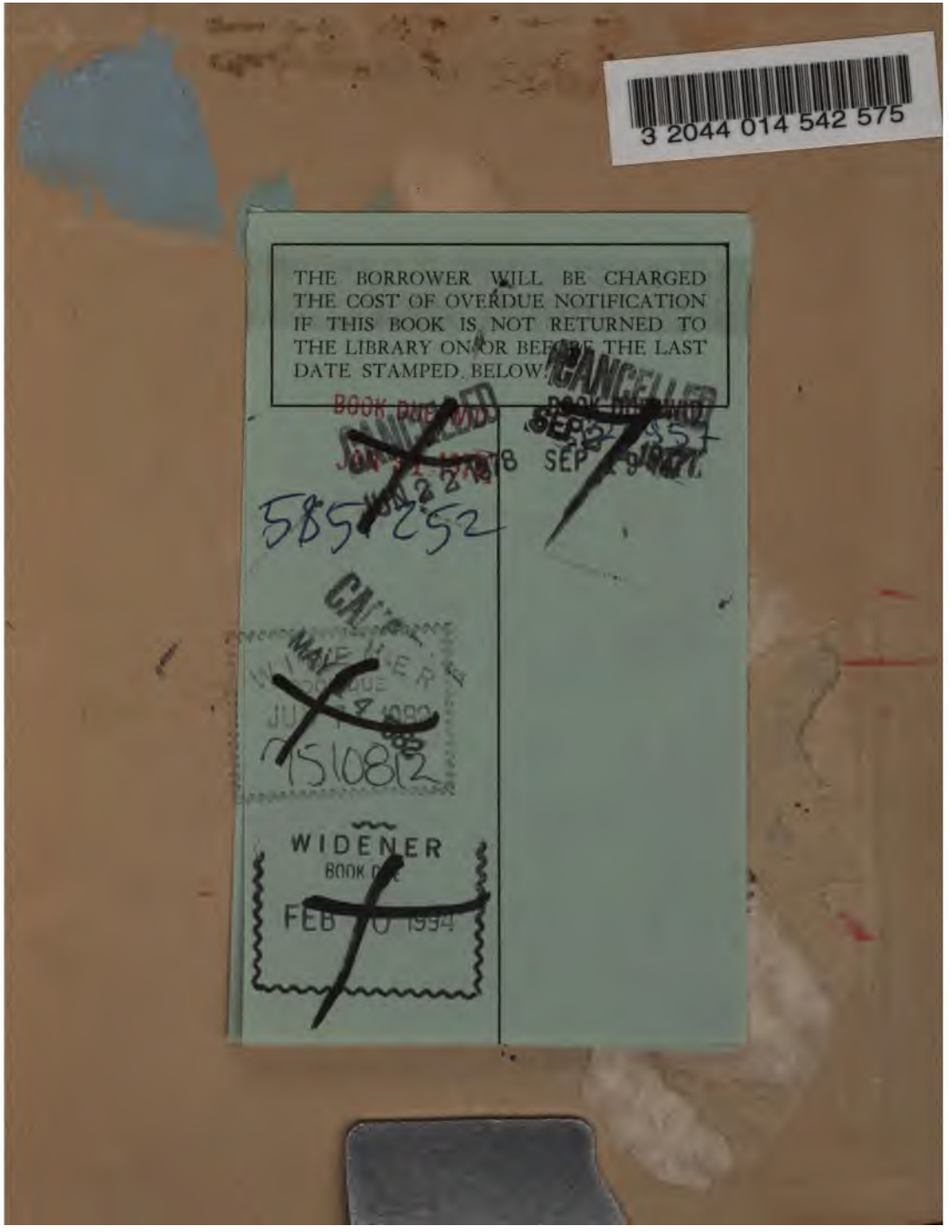
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